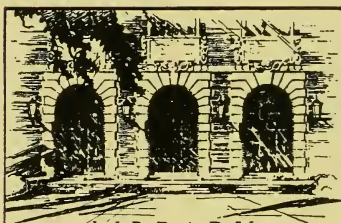


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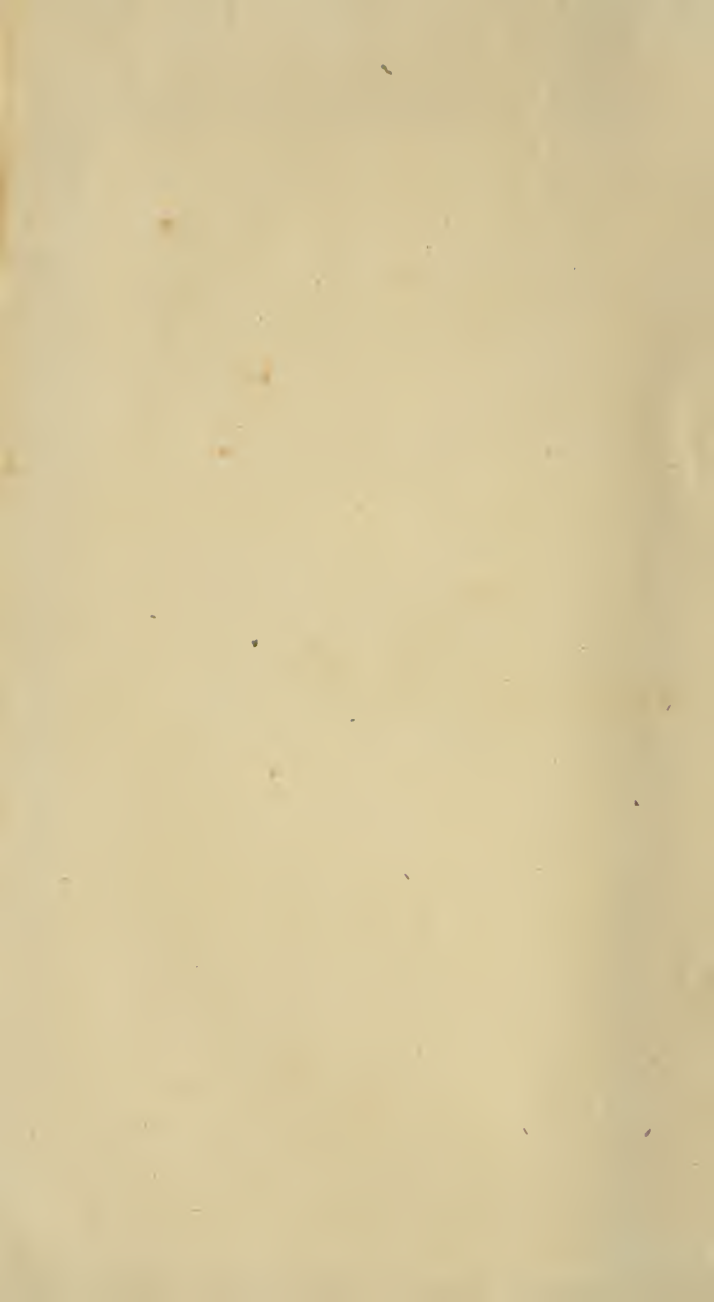
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THE

MISER MARRIED.



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THE

MISER MARRIED.

A Novel.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

CATHERINE HUTTON.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN,
PATERNOSTER ROW.

1813.

THE NATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARCHIVES

1900

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J. G. Barnard, Printer, Skinner-street, London.

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DEDICATION.



TO MY FATHER,

My beloved and respected Father.

TO you, from whom I inherit the Faculties which have enabled me to compose a Book; to whose Industry I am indebted for the Means of Leisure; and by

general 5mas 50 70m 11: 2v.

whose Kindness I am permitted to enjoy it ; do I dedicate that Book, as I have dedicated my life.

Of your Talents, which have broken through the Fetters of Ignorance, I will say nothing. They are before the World ; and the World has judged favourably of them. Of your Conduct, I may be allowed to say, that its Tenor is—Independence, for yourself ; and unlimited Indulgence, to all around you. I trust mine has

proved that I am not insensible of
the Blessing.

To you it is unnecessary ; but,
in this place, it is proper to add,
that

I am,

Your most grateful and

Affectionate Daughter,

CATHERINE HUTTON.

Birmingham,

May 1st, 1813.

PREFACE.

TO step forth at once, from the most impenetrable solitude, and present myself before the awful tribunal of the Public, is an effort so great, a transition so violent, that it agitates all my nerves, and, for the present, "murders sleep."

My skill in the composition of various sorts of puddings has never been questioned: my epistolary talents have been commended by my few correspondents, and not denied by myself: but that I possessed the inherent qualities necessary to write a book, was not suspected by me, till lately.

I had been reading a celebrated Novel, written by a celebrated Lady, which appeared to me of that kind called prose run mad. Beauty, sentiment and descrip-

tion, rose to such a pitch, that their effect was reversed. What should have excited admiration, became burlesque ; and I found myself obliged to laugh, where it was intended I should have wept. “ Surely,” said I, as I laid down the book, “ Surely *I* could write as well as this !” I tried, and believed I had not been mistaken.

To solicit the favour of the Public, would be to doubt its

justice. To the first I make no claim. On the latter I have the most firm reliance, and to that I submit.

THE
MISER MARRIED.

LETTER I.

TO MR. WILLIAM MENDALL.

Winterdale, Feb. 15, 1812.

I HOPE you get on with business. Tell the rascals I will not abate them a farthing. Because their fathers and grandfathers had the lands for nothing, I suppose they will think it an infringement on their rights to be made to pay for them. If it had not been

for this unlucky hurt on my foot, I would have played the devil with them myself. No man can doubt your honesty : I only fear your resolution. Remember, however, I delegate my devilship to you, and do not forget to use it.

I am miserable without you. Nothing goes right. Mr. Clodpole is the most cursed awkward fellow that ever existed, both about one's person and one's business. I wonder you, who have lived with me more than nineteen years, and scarcely ever left me a day, could not give him some better instructions. When he puts on my coat, he dislocates my shoulders ; and when he brushes it on my back, he labours as if he were rubbing down one of his horses.

I have lived wholly on venison and poultry since you left me, because I

would not trust Clod to go to market: and notwithstanding drumsticks, fag-ends of pasties, and nice pickings of bones, which have gone into the kitchen, he and Martha have smoaked one of the flitches of bacon. The dozen of wine you brought up will last me till you return; for though, at my usual allowance, they are calculated for only twenty-four days; yet, by saving a glass a day, I shall make them hold out a month. The key of the ale cellar plagues me more than all the rest, I carry it in my pocket; but I cannot draw ale myself; and, whenever Clod does, I am forced to stand on the cellar steps, to see that he does not drink at the cask.

My lawsuit with the fellow that cut the stick out of the hedge goes on well. Foreclose was here to-day, and says it will not cost me above fifty pounds;

4 THE MISER MARRIED.

while it will cost him a hundred. That is some comfort, however.

My son is not yet arrived. He writes me word he wants thirty pounds, before he can leave Oxford. No doubt he does. He always wants thirty pounds: so do I; but I know the value of it, as well as he, and shall not part with it.—I am sure his University education has cost me upwards of a hundred pounds a year, which is more than he will ever make of his latin and logic. The grand article of learning is pounds, shillings, and pence; and that he might have acquired at home.

The lady who has taken Ravenhill Lodge is come to it, with her family, which Martha tells me consists of a daughter and a niece. She says Mrs. Mereval is a handsome woman, not more than eight and thirty, and that the two girls are very beautiful. So

they may be for me. I had a glance of two female figures, peeping through the lattice of the little door in the park wall, and I sent for the carpenter directly, to nail it up with boards. These women may, perhaps, think they have a right to be acquainted with me, because they chuse to come and live at the next house. I can tell them that will be no easy matter. As I have done going to church, I shall not know them; and if I pass their house I shall not look at it.

Write, as soon as you receive this,
to

JOHN WINTERDALE.

LETTER II.

TO MR. WILLIAM MENDALL.

Winterdale, Feb. 15, 1812.

DEAR MUSTER MENDALL,

MY master sed as I mut put a letter in his franck ; so I takes this hopertunity of letting you to know my sinsare good witches for your return back ; for all the fatt has bin in the fire sense you have bin gon ; and my master is so misdeemful that nothing can satisfy him. Our new nybers Mrs. Merriveal, and Miss Merriveal, and Miss Mobrey, and too lady's mades, and a footmon and a groom, and a cuck and howsmade com last wick to Raving ill loge ; and verry fine fokes they be, Ile ashure you ; purtickilurly the footman ; for Ive only sin but him yet. For I gos won day to

the Red Lyon, to fatch a pennath of barm, and thar I sid him, owt o livvry, and as smart, as yourself, but may be a leetel younger. And Mrs. Tomson said, this is the squires how skipper; and so, says he, we shall be glad to see you at the loge, mame; and our ladies will be happy to wate of you at the hall, mame. Ah! says I, no sich luck, I me afeard; for hour master wunnot let us have no sosity with nobody.

Howsomever, I thot to myself, as they all knod I was the squrs how-skipper, Ide furbitch myself up a bit, among sich fine fokes; and you knos as Ive gott tew very good silk gownds, only they be a litel ainchant; so I axed my master to let me have the mantimucker from the town, to halter um a bit; and, with some truebell he gen me leaf. So it happened as Ide made him a nice lite pudden o the

Sundy, and hid nevr tuched it ; a the Mundy Ide put it in the huvoon, and wormd it up again, and then he never tuched it ; a the Tusday I cut it in slices, and warmd it afore the fire, and sent it in, for the third time, wich they say pays for all, and still it com back as it went ; but, gad ! it had lick to paid me ; for, as hill luck wud have it, I gen it the mantemacker. O Lord ! how did he starm, wen he axed for it a the Wensdy, and I told him hit was gon ! I thot, to be shure, hid a gin me warning.

Poor Rafe is worser off nor I bin ; for mastr dars not let him do nothin, for feard he shold cheat him. He darcent send him to markit, and so we has bin eatin o the baking flick, and mastar maks a nise at that ; tho God he knows I has sent him in all the rodid, to his fowls and his turk keys.

I ha made his venson past tys o drippin, becos he allows me but a pond and a hafe o butter a wick. But I shod never a don, if I was to tell you hall; only I must tel you that I begd on him to gi me the keys o the silk dam uskrums, to set the winders open, and dust the cortins; and I has gin the copwebs a good dressin; but I thinks, in anuther seven yere the beds will ware umselves out, and gee me no moor trubbel.

Rafe hav got aquinted with madam Mereveals groom, and he says he is a likely fellow. So no more at present from your wel wisher and feller sarvent till death,

MARTHA STABLE.

LETTER III.

TO MR. WILLYAM MENDILL.

Winterdeal, Febuary 15, 1812.

REVERINT CUR,

BEEIN as how yo tot me to rite, an Misis Matther do soy hur wil put this here in her lettr as be gooin o the masters franc, I thinks it my dewty to let yo to no as I be wel, at this prison, blessid be God for it. But I wish to the Lord you was at whom; for mastr be so du-berus that thar be no livin with him, an I conna doo nothin to plese him. God a marsi, a gentlemons vallets soy I, an lett me be vallett to mi hossis; for thoy be the koinder cattel o the tew, an the best to fettle. How yo hav manichd so mony yeres I doo not know; but a mi beside, from the hare on his yed to the

strings on his shoos, I conna doo nuthin as be rite. I conna so mutch as eat rite, ecksepting Ide ete nothing; and I cona drinck write, wthout Id drink woter: but I may wurk mi fill. If I wos al honds an horms, an nevr a throte, I mut shoot him. By gosh! uf yo stoy long I wul goo too mi plow agen, an leav mi wage behint me.

'To be suer misis mather be a gud old sole; but I shud not soy old, nyther, beein as how she do soy she be but fyve an thurti. But wee has bettr things nor she, uf a boddy darst to get at um: for Maddam Merrywool be comd to the lodg, an the grum hav tuck me ther, and gid me a horn o rare stingo: and thre sich ladyce I nevr clapt my II on as maddam an the tew yong misis; beside a pratty gipsy of a hows made. But I hood not hav mastar to know,

for no manderus thing ; for the hows hood not hold us bothe.

The poore hosis has not had a note sins yo went ; for I beleiv as mastr bee afeard I shod eat um miself, if so be as I cood gett at um. Carlo be wel, an sends his lov ; he wunna foller noboddy but me, now yo has laft him : wich be all at prisont from yores to come and

RALPH RUSSETTING.

*** As the writers of the foregoing letters were totally ignorant of the art of punctuation, the editor has added the proper stops, to make them intelligible.

LETTER IV.

TO MR. WILLIAM MENDALL.

Winterdale, Feb. 21, 1812.

I am glad to hear you have acquitted yourself so well upon the whole; though I do not approve of your engaging for the repairs of Jackson's house. The fellow, and his father, before him, wore it out. Why not mend it? I never destroyed a beam or rafter of it; and it is cursed hard my purse should suffer for those that did. You did right to refuse the lease. I will grant none. Though, if the scoundrels behave well, myself being judge of their behaviour, I shall not raise their rents of seven years.

If Taylor scruples to give the rent I have asked for his farm, put it up by

auction; for I will not lower it for his nine children. I was not the cause of his children coming into the world. If he was, it is his to provide for them. The same by Smith; his sheep have had the rot, and he wants me to throw him back a sum of money. Why does not he ask God Almighty for money, who sent the rot, if he did not bring it himself, by neglecting to drain his pastures? I have lived long enough in the world to see that if a man has a little money; that is, a little prudence, he may take upon himself the office of God Almighty, and repair all the evils that the sloth, improvidence, and extravagance of mankind bring upon themselves. Who do I ask to give me money? or even to lend it? Let them *go and do likewise*, and we shall not trouble one another.

Bring all the guineas you can. When

I have made the thirty-two thousand in the iron chest, fifty thousand, I shall be content. But, what with former subsidies, and present exporters and melting pots, I fear that will not be easily done. Government should make every guinea pass for thirty shillings, which would bring out my hoard and many another, and keep them in circulation, when they were out. I hate their flimsy paper.

Elrington's huntsman and hounds have been through the paddock where the wood and kids are piled, in pursuit of a hare. They have broken down the fence, which I shall make him pay for. I have entered an action against him, and shall recover damages.

For once, I shall take your advice, and will send Henry the thirty pounds he asks for; but I will delay it a week, that the expences of this week may be

included in the sum. I hope he will be a prudent lad, when he comes home; for I am sure he has hitherto been a very expensive one.

I had the misfortune, yesterday, at a sudden turn of the road, to burst full in the faces of a couple of young girls, who, I suppose, by their slender figures, and thin white drapery, are the young women at the Lodge. I could not help looking at them, before I recollected myself; but I took no notice of them, and hope I shall be more upon my guard, if I meet them again. Such people as these may not want money; but they may want a haunch of venison, or a basket of grapes, or a house to gossip at; and I do not want company.

I am heartily glad you come home next week. Hob is a novice at every thing, except cramming his stomach;

and he is made of stuff that will not mend. Your services, and the money you bring, will be almost equally welcome to

JOHN WINTERDALE.

LETTER V.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Ravenhill Lodge, Feb. 22, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

I acknowledge my promise to write to you once a week, and with pleasure I now begin to perform it ; for, besides my friendship for you ; besides my hope of hearing of dear, lost, bewitching London ; I feel I shall want something to do—that most dreadful of all wants, except the want of bread ! Where are you now ? In a crowded assembly—at a ball—admired, and wanting nothing. While I am sitting alone, by my dressing-room fire, and my bed candle, already, perhaps forgotten by that world I cannot forget.

At such a time too! If houses in the country must be entered upon at Candlemas, why did not the makers of Candlemas place it in July, when London is a skeleton, and shady groves and purling streams are delicious? Now, my partner is dancing with, and my admirer is flattering another woman. Well! be it so. It is my daily prayer to my heavenly Father that his will be done, and I submit to it; though it is certainly not my will. But I am growing serious; so I will give you our promised history.

My father, as you may have heard was gay and magnificent. His fine estate was unequal to his expences, and he left it in debt. Still, as I am his sole heiress, I was accounted rich; and so I accounted myself; till circumstances that have arisen lately have occasioned some doubts.

A distant relation, who went to India an age ago, and whose very existence was forgotten, arrived in England, some time since ; and, finding Sir George Montgomery was dead, without a male heir, assumed the title ; and, what is a great deal worse for me, he fancies he has a right to the estate. This notion of his he has communicated to the gentlemen of the law, and God only knows what will be the event. In the mean time, the only indisputable part of our fortune is my mother's jointure, during her life, and such personal property as my father left behind him.

My mother, who brought Sir George nothing but her beauty, has a jointure of only one thousand pounds a year. My guardians have allowed her five hundred pounds a year, for my board and education. But you must be sen-

sible that the style in which we have lived could not be supported upon an income of fifteen hundred pounds. Shall I confess it? We have run into debt! deeply in debt! a circumstance never to be justified! It can only be palliated by observing that when I came of age, and consequently into the possession of my father's patrimony, of which I want only fourteen months, I could, and should have paid all.

I might lay the whole blame upon Lady Montgomery, whose habits of expense have always exceeded her prudent resolutions, and say that, girl as I was, she should not have permitted me to tax my future fortune; but I will own that, borne along on the tide of dissipation, I was willing enough, myself, to pay the penalty.

The chance of losing my fortune, and of even being obliged to refund

the income that has been allowed me, out of the estate, has brought us both to our senses. My mother has sold her equipage and splendid furniture, and dismissed all her servants, with the exception of Horton, her own maid. We have packed her up with us, in a post chaise, and are gone, privately, nobody knows whither, and nobody is to know whither, but yourself, and two other persons, Mr. Mountney, our solicitor and my cousin Miss Mowbray. You will perceive the importance of the secret intrusted to you, and guard it, with the utmost care.

Mr. Mountney has taken a respectable house for us on the banks of the Wye. I have contrived to have my favourite horse sent after us; and my mother has hired a groom of the country. Not like a London groom, whose dress and manners his master is desirous to imitate; but a good, stout, rosy-faced

hind, who, when he has dressed my horse, can handle a spade or a hoe, and dress our cabbages and potatoes. Two women servants, besides Horton, make up the remainder of our own establishment. I have now to introduce to you another part of our family.

I told you, before we left town, that Miss Mowbray, the daughter of a clergyman and my father's sister, both long since dead, having attained the age of twenty-one, and become her own mistress, had written to my mother, as the widow of her uncle, to ask if she would allow her to reside with us, and would bring her out into the world. On our sudden blight this sweet girl has consented to live with us and renounce the world. She joined us at Hereford, with a man and woman servant; and, as she pays my mother two hundred pounds a year for

her own board, and fifty for each of her servants, she will be a pecuniary advantage to us: to say nothing of the advantage of her company; which I shall call a blessing, as I can think of no other word to express my sense of it. She is also a horse-woman, and has a couple of saddle-horses; so, with our dashing habits, and her man to attend us, we may yet alarm the banks of the Wye.

My cousin is all that is lovely in woman; tall, elegant, fair, beautiful, modest, unaffected, sensible, compassionate, and good-tempered. Perhaps you may be disposed to think I had rather have such a companion on the solitary banks of the Wye than in the gay crowds of London. I do not exactly know how far you may be right. That friendship cannot enter into competition with love, in the female bosom, I am ready to al-

low; but that it may be superior to vanity I will boldly assert. Let some one man, whom I may happen to love, prefer me to my cousin; and, though all others prefer her to me, I am content. I feel that my love of one man might surpass my love of woman; but my regard for twenty, or, if you please, the whole sex, would bow before it. In my cousin I seem to have a security that her one man and mine will not be the same person. Her timid, gentle, retiring manners may attract some "shepherd beside a clear stream;" while my laughing black eyes and open countenance may strike some "Captain with a smart cockade;" whom I should certainly prefer to all the despairing swains in England.

In one point my cousin has a great advantage over me. Her mother's fortune, which was ten thousand pounds,

descended to her, without addition or diminution ; and, brought up in the family of a man of honour, her guardian ; and within the pale of a country fire-side ; it has greatly increased during her minority. She has acquired habits of regularity and economy ; while I have been anticipating my future fortune—wasting money not yet my own—and, as it may now prove,—never to be my own.

I hear you ask (for, as I cannot literally hear you, I make speeches for you) Are you not dreadfully uneasy, when it depends upon the breath of a Lord Chancellor whether you shall be a wealthy heiress, or, as the vulgar saying is, worse than nothing ? Why, no ;—I do not feel a great disposition to be miserable. A chill runs through my bosom, now and then ; but I always think of the maxim of some great old

philosopher :—" There are two sorts of things you should never grieve at ; those you can help, and those you cannot help." The reasons for both are obvious. If it seem good to my Lord Chancellor that I should inherit my father's land, I shine out again. If he think a stranger have a better title to it than I, I hide my head for ever. At any rate, we are learning wisdom ; and, as these grave lords are seldom hasty in their decisions, the lesson may chance to leave a lasting impression. Besides, I " consider the lillies of the field, how they grow." Like them, I can " toil not, neither can I spin ;" and, like them, I hope to be provided for.

One word more, and I have done with this hateful subject, owing what I cannot pay : more hateful, far, than the loss of fortune, were it certain ; for, of all feelings, that of having done wrong

is the most insupportable. Concealment implies guilt. We have, indeed, been guilty. I must beg you to address your letters, not to your old friend, Charlotte Montgomery, but to your new acquaintance, though no less affectionate

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

LETTER VI.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Ravenhill Lodge, Feb. 29, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

I WILL now give you our domesticals—why not our domesticals, as well as your theatricals? The situation of our house is very fine; and, when nature shall have put on her mantle of green, it will be charming; but, at present, I own to you, that I think London smoke a better colour. We are on rising ground, and overlook almost the whole of a gentleman's park. “Ha!” say you, interrupting me, “then you have a gentleman!” Have patience; and let me go on. Well, as I was saying; beautiful lawns; venerable woods; noble lake; and as the

orators of the hammer say, every thing corresponding. Again you interrupt me—"But where is the mansion?" That, my dear, is a point I wish to be informed of, as well as yourself. I have not seen it. No soul alive has seen it; except its inhabitants, and the few persons who are obliged to go to it upon business. The great gates are barred within side; the porter's lodge is shut up; the park is surrounded by a wall, higher than a man on horseback; and the only access to the place is by a door in the wall, that a man on horseback can just pass through. Till lately, the upper part of this was lattice; but, as Eleanor Mowbray and myself were looking through it, when we first came, we accidentally got a peep at the owner, and the next day we found it boarded up. I dare say the man thinks himself very unfortunate in having a

neighbour; especially one who, if he looks out of his windows, cannot avoid looking into his park! The house, fronting the other way, and being half surrounded with wood, is not visible to us, or any living creature, except the birds that fly over it.

We had the happiness of meeting this gentleman one day, in a place where he could not shun us. He almost started at the sight of us, and looked like a man taken by surprise; but, recollecting himself, he fixed his eyes upon the ground, determining, no doubt, that they should never see us more.

Mr. Winterdale, for that is his name, is a widower, about eight and forty years of age; rather under the middle size; thin, active, and looking pretty much like a gentleman. His features are not unhandsome. Their charac-

teristic is melancholy and care. His eyes have great keenness and penetration. As I saw all this in a moment, I beg you will bestow great praise on my penetration: not as a regular physiognomist; a disciple of Lavater, learned in chins, lips, and noses; but as an adept in the general expression of the human face: and, as I think we are more likely to reason wrong than to feel wrong, my conclusions may, perhaps be as just, as those of any divine in Switzerland.

Mr. Winterdale has an only son, just coming from college. God grant I may be able to display my skill on his phiz, before it be long! *Phiz* strikes me as a very low word; and, I dare say, when it escaped my pen, it made the same impression upon you. I am wondering why! It is certainly derived from physiognomy, which is a

noble word, and very much of a Grecian. It must be owned, however, that poor little *Phiz* has sadly degenerated from his father, by having lost four syllables of his stature.

Now, what a comfort might this Mr. Winterdale prove to us, if he were inclined to be sociable! He might even make up one of the necessities of life, a rubber at whist. Three is a most awkward party.

Eleanor and I walk unmercifully, and ride manfully. We brave all weathers, except rain or snow. We play on the piano, and we play at backgammon. We drive our needles on at a surprising rate; and should do so oftener, if we had any spur to our industry; but we need not make our own petticoats, and as for any fancy work to adorn our persons, to whom

should we shew it, when finished?
We do sometimes, however,

With our needles create both one flower,
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion;
Both warbling of one song, both in one key.

I have made a most unhappy quotation of Helena and Hermia: for, as if to refute my former argument, Lysander came in, and parted them. May I never know a Lysander that should part us!

But, my dear girl, I still want employment. What shall I do? something I will do; if it be to write a Dictionary or an Herbal; for nothing in the world is such hard work as doing of nothing. Apropos of an Herbal—I will paint all the flowers of the field, and bind them into a huge folio.

What a bright thought! In fine weather I will go hunting daisies and cowslips; and in bad weather I will make them bloom on paper. Thus am I prepared for all weathers—I cannot do without an object. In town my object was amusement and admiration. So it shall be still. My amusement shall be collecting and perpetuating some of the most beautiful productions of nature; and I will admire them, instead of being admired myself.

My country air and exercise are not lost; for I already see a rosy tinge stealing over my cheeks. Eleanor brought her's along with her; and she may rejoice that we did not give her an opportunity to rub it off, in the midnight revels of London.

My mother does not so well accommodate her mind to her situation as myself. She is less flexible and too

old to run after daisies. Accustomed for a longer time, to company and dissipation, she cannot so easily find resources around her, or within herself. She seeks no employment, and takes no exercise ; but shuts herself up with Horton, in her dressing room, for hours together. What may be the subjects of their conversation, I cannot even guess.

To-morrow we go to church. It is nearly a mile distant, but we purpose to walk ; my mother having, as you know, no other means of getting thither. Surely, we shall see somebody ! Surely we shall get a bow from the Vicar ! O, that ever I should be fallen so low, should be so totally helpless, as to place my hopes on a bow from the Vicar ! It is time to assure you that

I am truly your's,

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

LETTER VII.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Ravenhill Lodge, March 7, 1812.

YOU tell me I am still remembered. Ah! Harriet, if I lose my Chancery suit, I shall be remembered only to be condemned. Never mind! my herbal goes on swimmingly! I have already copied the cold snow-drop, the golden crocus, the humble violet, and the stinging nettle; for I am determined to make drawing a moral business, and to remind myself of the bitters, as well as the sweets, of this mingled world.

On Sunday, as we intended, we went to church. The Vicar was so struck with our appearance, that it, more than once, puzzled his performance;

and I do believe he thought of the bow I had bespoken at the end of it, when he ought to have been thinking of the lessons he was giving us.

The next day, imagining he was bound in honour to return our visit to his church, he called upon us in his carriage, accompanied by his wife. The long-tailed, slouch-headed beasts were taken from the plough, for the occasion : and the lank-haired plough-boy lost half his day's work to drive them. The parson is fat, coarse, and vulgar ; and his lady more fat, more coarse, and intended by nature to be more vulgar ; but she has happily surmounted the obstacles which nature threw in the way of her being elegant and polite.

Our interesting visitors began by assuring us that they had taken the first opportunity of waiting upon us,

and hoped we should be very good neighbours. "Indeed, ma'am," said the lady, addressing herself to my mother, "this *here* is a very sad place ; but we will do all we can to make it agreeable to you. I dare say, by your *genteelness* you are a Londoner, and you will think it *wastly* dull, especially at first. I am a Londoner, myself," continued the lady, raising herself in her chair, "and was always used to a *heap* of people, till I married Mr. Thacker ; and when I first came into the country, I thought it most monstrous stupid and *fartiguing*."

"I was not born in London," said my mother, "though I have lived a good deal in it ; but I think this country very beautiful."

"O, yes," rejoined Mrs. Thacker, "the *prospecks* are *very* pretty to be sure ; but the neighbourhood is quite

shocking. There is not a *creter* you can *visit*, but *we*."

"Pray," asked I, "does nobody visit the gentleman that lives in yonder park?"

"Visit *him*!" exclaimed Mr. Thacker. "It is beneath any christian to enter his gates, if he would let him!"

"Have you, then, who are the clergyman of his parish, no acquaintance with him," demanded my mother?

"God forbid I should," answered the reverend gentleman.

"God forbid, indeed," added the lady; "for he's the *worst* of all flesh!"

"Pray in what respect," asked my mother?

"In every *respeck* in the *world*," replied Mrs. Thacker. "In the first place, he was married to a sweet,

beautiful *voman* ; and he never let her rest, till he had broke her heart. In the second place, he has but one son, a *very* fine clever young fellow, and he never has sixpence in his pocket. In the third place, he screws up all his tenants, and goes to law with all his neighbours. He even went to law with Mr. Thacker, here, about paying his tythes ; and, since then, he never goes to church."

" These accusations are truly shocking," said I.

" O, dreadful, Ma'am," returned Mrs. Thacker ! " He has but one good property about him ; and that is, he *will* pay his debts."

I felt the colour in my cheeks, and charity for my neighbour in my heart, at the same moment.

" Does he shun society himself," ask

ed my cousin ? “ or does every body fly from him ? ”

“ Both,” replied Mrs. Thacker. “ He won’t let any body enter his gates, but his lawyer : and nobody would go near him, if they might. He used to prowl about his park, like a mastiff ; and watch if any body came ; and ask them what business they had there ; and so nobody dares to go anigh him.”

“ Mr. Winterdale’s singular habits are unfortunate for us,” said my mother. “ We should have been glad of an agreeable neighbour so near us.”

“ Monstrous unfortunate, indeed,” said Mrs. Thacker. “ I should like an agreeable neighbour, myself, of all things ; but, really there is not a *creter* one can notice : nothing but farmer’s wives and daughters. I do send for two or three of them, sometimes ; but,

upon my word, they are so excessive *vulgar* there's no bearing them. However, Ma'am, we shall always be *pur-digious* happy to see you and the ladies ; and so we must make it up to one another."

After a little more of the same kind of conversation, which, though not remarkable for its elegance, gave us some idea of the land we live in, the gentleman and lady took their leave.

I think, as my mother does, that we are unfortunate in our neighbours. When I found there were a hall and a parsonage at Winterdale, I hoped to have found two conversable families ; but the one will not speak to us, and of the other's eloquence we shall soon be weary. There is still a fine, clever young fellow to come, however ; though he is without sixpence in his pocket. I have some hopes of him ; but I must

not let them carry me too far ; because, perhaps, I may not have a sixpence in my own. He is come, but we have not seen him.

What a wretch is Mr. Winterdale, if this worthy couple say true ! I would fain take off something from their report, on account of the suit about the tythes, as I understand Mr. Thacker bought the living, and he might possibly be desirous to reimburse himself a little too hastily ; but I cannot hear one word in mitigation of Mr. Winterdale's offences. His estate is said to be more than six thousand pounds per annum : he is said to have upwards of thirty thousand guineas in his coffers ; and his whole establishment consists of two men and one woman servant ; besides a gardener and a keeper, who do not live in the house.

Mr. Winterdale's first man looks as

much like a gentleman as his master. He has lived with him nearly twenty years, and strange to tell, has the good word and goodwishes of every living soul, his master, himself, not excepted. He is house steward, and land steward ; butler, and footman; valet, and purveyor. If ever his master does a good action, it is at the instigation of this man. His name is Mendall.

The second man has lived with Mr. Winterdale seven years. He is an honest rustic, who is groom, and man of all work, under the other.

The woman servant is a staid maiden, verging upon forty, who goes by the name of housekeeper; though she fills the different offices of cook, house-maid, and laundry-maid, in addition to that from which she receives her title. She has been with Mr. Winterdale fifteen years. The whole house is shut up;

except two eating rooms ; two sleeping rooms, for the father and son ; and one, for each of the servants. These the poor woman cleans by stealth ; as she can get her master out of the way.

If you ask from what source I have gained this information, I answer, from the only one whence it could possibly be derived—from servants. Ralph, the rustic, has been several times at the lodge, and is very communicative over a glass of strong beer ; though as much afraid, as if he were speaking treason. Eleanor and I sleep in the same room ; and, when Robinson, her maid, attends us, she has entertained us with Ralph's narrations. This is not very honourable, you will say. But, my dear, if we will not allow a servant to talk, at the lodge, we can never hear any voices but our own.

There is something incomprehensible

in the character of this Mr. Winterdale. A bad husband, and a bad father—how can he be a good master? how can good servants live with him? wanting, too, as he is, in the point most essential, in their estimation; generosity? for generosity is with them what charity is with the whole species: it covers a multitude of sins. If the master be liberal, the servants not only feel the benefit; but they share the honour, and boast of his good deeds, as if they were their own. If he be parsimonious, they are not only losers; but they are ashamed of him, and participate in his disgrace. I cannot understand Mr. Winterdale, unless I saw him nearer.

The father of Mr. Thacker was a tallow chandler, in a country town, who, wishing to have his son a gentleman, brought him up to the church. By the

time the son had obtained a curacy of forty pounds a year, the father was become a bankrupt; and forty pounds a year might have been the gentleman's income still, if he had not, luckily met with his present wife. Mrs. Thacker was the only child of a rich fishmonger in London, who died, and left her about ten thousand pounds. She came into the country, on a visit to her relations, and it happened that the kind stars of Mr. Thacker had placed him, as a boarder, in the same family. Miss Salmon was very desirous to be a lady. She gave up her title of fishmonger's daughter, for that of clergyman's wife; a part of her fortune was settled upon her; the other part was given to Mr. Winterdale, for her husband's induction to the vicarage of this place; and the lady has looked down upon the whole

parish ever since. When she said that Mr. Winterdale was the worst of all flesh, it would have been in character to have added that he was an odd fish.

If you will not let Robinson talk, you must not let me write.

Ever your's,

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

LETTER VIII.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Ravenhill Lodge, March 14, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

WE went in a trio, to return the visit of our neighbours, the Thackers; and my mother has been prevailed upon by them, to take a step, which does not appear to me a very safe one; to go with them to an assembly at the next country town. I suppose the chances are a million to one that we shall not meet any person who has ever seen us before; but while that one was possible, I would have kept close in my covert. Between ourselves, I am a little afraid of my mother. I am convinced she leads a miserable life, though she does not complain of it.

She catches at the very Thackers, rather than be without company, and looks forwards to her public *entrée* into a little country assembly with as much pleasure as I have heard her express at the *dejeuné* of a Duchess. Indeed it has set us all in motion; and be it known to you, Harriet, that Mr. Thacker is not the only gentleman of our party.

We found, at the Vicarage, a tall, straight, thin, very thin man, about twenty-six years of age, with handsome delicate features, a fair complexion, a hand like a lady's, and a squeaking voice, like nothing I ever heard before. This gentleman, Mr. Thacker introduced to us as his nephew.

"Indeed," said Mrs. Thacker, "I am *purdigious* happy that Mr. Sharp happened to come just now; for you know, Ma'am," addressing herself to

my mother, "though you and me might be *very* good company for one another, yet young ladies like young gentlemen; and now we shall all be suited."

"To suit us all," said Mr. Thacker, "we should have one or two more gentlemen."

"You gentlemen must have your joke," said his wife, "but I don't know *where* you can find such another as Mr. Sharp. He's a real gentleman, ladies. He keeps his carriage, and does nothing in the *world*. His father, to be sure, was in business, but he got a hundred thousand pound; that's a plumb, as we say in London; and when he had given twenty thousand to his daughter, he had fourscore thousand to leave to his son; and if that is not enough to make a gentleman, I don't know what is."

We congratulated Mr. Sharp on his good fortune; when he poured forth such a torrent of nonsense as I never heard in my life. I thought I would send you this and that speech, as he was chattering at the rate of ten loquacious chambermaids, but they were composed of such untangible stuff, that I could not retain them. I fear I can give you no idea of his elocution. Poor Mrs. Thacker could hardly find room to slide in a sentence, and her husband did not attempt it. At length she raised her voice, and cried,

“I told you ladies, what good company Mr. Sharp was. It’s impossible to be dull, when he’s by. But you don’t know half his *ricommentations* yet: he sings like a *nightingirl*, and he dances like an *angil*.”

“O dear, aunt, now I wonder at you,” said Mr. Sharp, “How can you

go to say so? I'm sure I *niver* pretend to sing at all, nor to dance neither. If *nubbody* had a better *vice* than I have, *nubbody* would *iver* sing. I'm sure its *enough* to frighten the crows, and if I was to go to sing, I'll be bound for it the ladies would all run away *frum* me."

There needs not your singing to accomplish that, thought I, if we were at liberty to run away.

"*Vell, Vell,*" said Mrs. Thacker, "we shall get you some night, after supper, and then we'll call upon you, and then you shall call upon the ladies. That's our *vay* in London, you know, Ma'am."

My mother said that Miss Mowbray and Miss Mereval would, with pleasure, contribute their share to the amusement of the company, at any time.

“O law, Ma’am,” cried Mr. Sharp, “I’m always willing to *obleege* the company, *every think* in my power. I’ll do my best; but as for singing so well as my aunt says I do, you must not expect any *sich* a thing, though I am sure I’m much *obleege*d to her for her good word; but when I come to go to sing before ladies, I am all over in a *trembleation*. But you must excuse it, I’ll do as well as *iver* I can.”

I was afraid Mr. Sharp was going to do as well as ever he could, at that moment; but Mrs. Thacker prevented him, saying, “No, no, after supper’s the time. We never sing in London till after supper. Besides, I’ve a *purposal* to make to the ladies here. We’ve a *very* nice assembly in the next town, Ma’am, a *very* pleasant meeting indeed, quite a *seleck* party. There’s some folks one cannot notice,

to be sure, but then one need not take any notice of them, you know. Mr. Thacker and I are subscribers, and we shall be amazing happy to *interduce* you and the ladies, if you will give us leave. The last night this season is next Thursday but one, and I shall be *wasly* proud to take you in our carriage with Mr. Thacker and me; and I dare say, Mr. Sharp will be so obliging as to send for a *po shay*, for himself and the ladies. Won't you, Mr. Sharp?"

"O dear, yes, certainly," replied Mr. Sharp, "I am sure I would not *spile* an agreeable party for all the world. When you mentioned it yesterday, I was *heavaty queavaty*, and I thought I should like to go, and then I thought I should not like to go; but to favour the ladies, I would not *hisitate* a minute I would go any where in the world."

“Then,” said Mrs. Thacker, “it’s all settled. You have no objection, Mrs. Mereval?”

“Indeed,” replied my mother, “I do not know what to say to it. I came into the country with a resolution to go to no public place whatever.”

“O, Ma’am,” said Mrs. Thacker, “this *here* is nothing at all: not like the great *concus* of people that you and *me* have been used to, in London: just a snug party, of fifteen couple to dance, and two or three card tables; that’s all.”

“Well,” said my mother, “I think we will venture to go.”

I felt very uneasy, and said nothing.

“But,” continued my mother, “you must give me leave to make a trifling alteration in your plan. You can take Mr. Sharp, and I will take charge of Miss Mowbray and Miss Mereval.”

“O, dear Ma’am,” said Mr. Sharp, before Mrs. Thacker could reply, “pray don’t deprive me of the pleasure of taking care of the young ladies. It will be the very *charmingest* thing in the world for me to take them in a post chaise; as for the expence, I’m sure I don’t think *anythink* at all about it.”

“And you will be much better *commodated* in our carriage,” added Mrs. Thacker. “Them nasty *po shays* are *very* horrid. Let the young folks put up with *them there inconveniences*.”

“But you know, Mrs. Thacker,” said my mother, “that in London we do not suffer young women to go out without a *chaperone*.”

Mrs. Thacker seemed at a loss for a moment, and then cried, “*Vell, vell*; as you please. *Them shoproons* are *very* good things in London; but I

thought we might do *very vell* without them here, in the country."

"Miss Mowbray," said Mr. Sharp, "if your aunt is so cruel as not to give us leave to go together to the assembly, I hope you will allow me the happiness to have the honour to dance with you, when we get there. My aunt Thacker flatters me in saying that I am a good dancer. I hope you won't believe I am any *sich a* thing; for I know *nothink* at all of dancing: I only hop a little, sometimes, for my own *amoosement*; but I must own and confess that I think dancing the very *delightfullest* thing in all the world; and no pleasure can be *equil* to that of dancing with you."

"I'm sure Miss Mowbray's much obliged to you," said Mrs. Thacker. "She can have no objection to dance with you," added she, looking at Eleanor?

“Certainly not,” said Miss Mowbray, and bowed.

Though I was sorry for poor Eleanor, I could not help inwardly laughing at her vexation. The gentleman, to shew his politeness to his promised partner, attended us home. He talked to us the whole way, without ceasing; but, instead of endeavouring to recollect his conversation, I ought rather to apologize, for having already given you so much of his effeminate folly, and the bold vulgarity of his aunt.

But we have seen a being of a different mould. Only seen him, yet; but I mean to have him——if I can. As Eleanor and I were walking along a path, leading through a beautiful wood, we saw, advancing towards us, a man——such a man——so handsome, so well made, so elegant; and, at the same

time, so “woe-begone”—that it could be no other than Mr. Henry Winterdale. His only ostensible companion was a fine spaniel dog; but his real companions seemed to be his own thoughts. Our path was narrow, and we passed him close. He looked at us, with evident surprize; but, instead of transferring his eyes to senseless stocks and stones, he fixed them upon us, and made us a respectful bow. He has not one lineament of his father in him. That I will venture to pronounce. Whoever his mother was, she has happily transmitted her beauties and graces, and, as I believe, her virtues, to her son. He owes nothing to his father, but his name.

Now, would not you think it a most extraordinary coincidence of circumstances, that we should meet the same

gentleman, in the same spot, and at the same hour, the next day? nay, still more extraordinary, that we should have done so every day since? yet such is the fact. It is certainly the most attractive walk in the country, so we are under no temptation to change it, which is lucky enough; for, if we were to do so, it would almost look like breaking an appointment.

Tell me, will this nonpareil be at the assembly? Does he ever go to assemblies? Does he even go any where, without asking his father's leave? He looks noble and manly,—surely he cannot descend to such tame submission as that!—Ah! he has not sixpence in his pocket; an evil no person can contend with, except by such unworthy means as we have used! If he is at the assembly, however, he dances with me, that is certain; for

Eleanor is engaged; and where can he find, on the banks of the Wye, two such damsels as Eleanor Mowbray, and

Your

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

LETTER IX.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Ravenhill Lodge, Mar. 21, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

Thursday evening found us all arrayed for the ball. With Eleanor and me simplicity was the word. We wore light embroidered muslins, sparingly adorned with lace ; and my dark hair, and Eleanor's auburn, were fastened with a single comb. A set of cornelians for me, and of amber for her, were all our ornaments. My mother indulged herself with a few pearls, and looked charmingly. I sighed as I entered what Mrs. Thacker called "The nasty po-shay."

We drove to the parsonage, and proceeded, in due form, to the assembly rooms, six miles distant ; the comman-

dant gentleman's carriage leading the van, and the subaltern post chaise bringing up the rear.

We found the company such as might have been expected, and such as were little likely to know us—the clergy of the neighbourhood, with their families; and the lawyers and *poticaries* of the town, (which is not a small one) with their's. Trade finds no admission here; and these petty professors of divinity, law, and physic, are more anxious to exclude it, and more tenacious of their rank above it, than those would be, whom fortune has placed at a greater distance from it. But the distinction does not quite end here. Those whom Mrs. Thacker conceived it impossible to notice, were the refuse of the privileged professions.

We found the dress of the females, that of London almost caricatured; scantiness made more scanty, and

waists flourishing in more than their accustomed length. Mrs. Thacker had, judiciously enveloped her capacious figure in a rich rose-coloured satin ; wisely imagining that an exact display of its proportions, would not be much in its favour. The men, instead of exceeding those in town, were far behind them. No groom-like appearance was affected here ; no bang up coachman, or Bond-street loungeer ever became the model of the place.

I amused myself with such observations as these, till I began to scrutinize the male part of the assembly, with a view to my own interest. *This* was contemptible ; *that* I certainly could not dance with ; and *the other* I was not quite sure whether I could dance with or no ; till, in the midst of my reflections, I saw every bird of the air come and choose his mate, and I

was left without any mate at all! Would you believe it? The whole company stood up for country dances; and myself, and two other forlorn girls, only, were left behind! I assure you, this produced a great revolution in my sentiments. Eleanor, whom I had pitied before, had got a partner that really did not dance amiss, and was dancing herself like one of the Graces: while I sat smiling, and talking to my mother and Mrs. Thacker, for fear people should think I was mortified. I looked with an eye of complacency at the contemptibles, and thought *this* was very well; *that* was tolerable; and even *the other* might have done better than sitting still. I endeavoured to console myself with the idea that fear, alone, had prevented them from approaching me; but I could not help confessing that a

little of their love would have been preferable to such fear.

Every time the door opened, I anxiously turned my eyes towards it, in search of Mr. Henry Winterdale. In the middle of the second dance I saw him enter. I now talked to my mother with more earnestness than ever, determined not to make the first advances, but expecting, every moment, he would find his way to me. No; I might have talked till now, before he had interrupted me. At length I looked for him; he was engaged in conversation with some of the elderly men, who did not dance, and seemed quite unconscious that I was in the room. When I caught his eye, he bowed; but moved not from the place where he was standing. Well, thought I, I will not have *you*, however! You

know, Harriet, I only promised to have him---if I could.

At last, entered two officers, both well looking, but one of them the handsomest man I ever saw, with dark complexion, and very fine black eyes. How could it be possible that officers should not enter into my calculations, at a country assembly, when I know soldiers are so abundant in every country town? I can only account for it by my ideas being absorbed by creatures of another species. Now, thought I, I shall have my revenge. I cast a side-long glance at the two other unprovided-for Misses, and found they could not at all come into competition with your Charlotte. I saw, without seeming to see, the handsome officer go up to the master of the ceremonies, and, in a few minutes, they advanced toge-

ther, to the place where we were sitting. My heart beat with expectation. But how was I electrified when the master of the ceremonies said, that Captain Montgomery begged to have the honour of dancing with me. The Captain bowed, and I bowed, and he led me to the dancers. Who is Captain Montgomery? Undoubtedly there are many families of that name; but there is a possibility that he may be of my family! that he may even be the son of the Indian Montgomery, who claims my father's estate. O, how many possibilities are attached to this, that I dare not even think of! My mother, however, sees them all, and speaks of them without reserve.

We passed a most agreeable evening. My partner was all my utmost wishes could fancy; sensible, agreeable, animated, and attentive. His brother officer paired with one of

the forsaken damsels, who, no doubt, congratulated herself upon having drawn a prize. The other, finding all hopes extinguished, withdrew to overlook the card tables; for Mr. Henry Winterdale, the only disengaged young man in the room, did not choose to take compassion on her lonely situation. After walking and conversing for an hour or two, with different parties, we saw him no more.

When the dancing was ended, our partners attended us to the carriage. I confess my vanity suffered in letting Captain Montgomery see what a carriage. But I comforted myself by reflecting that, if he had not danced with a lady of the post chaise, he might have been reduced to a nymph of the pattens; for, wrapped in pelisses, and armed with pattens, did both he and ourselves see many of the ladies, fighting their

way home, through cold and dirt, with the assistance of their servant maids. As Captain Montgomery handed in my mother, he asked her permission to wait upon her, the next day, to enquire after her health, and that of Miss Mercival and Miss Mowbray. You will imagine she granted it with pleasure.

Mr. Thacker's carriage led the way, as before. At first we followed close; but as their horses had in idea the comforts of their own stable, and our's considered that they were going from home, by degrees, we were left far behind. We now discovered another reason for it; the post boy was so much intoxicated, that he bowed from side to side, in his dicky, and was utterly incapable of guiding either himself or his horses. Eleanor and I did not like our situation; but, as it was not in our power to mend it, we each, severally determined to be

silent; and trust to the sagacity of the horses, and the protection of that Power which overlooks all the actions both of men and beasts. At last, the post-boy was thrown out of his seat, by a sudden jolt; my mother screamed; the horses were frightened, and set off. At that moment a gentleman ran up to their heads; stopped them; seized the reins, and stepped into the dickey. It was Mr. Henry Winterdale. Who, now, shall say that gentlemen should not learn to drive? Of all the arts invented by knights errant, of old, for the rescue of distressed damsels, who ever heard of driving a post-chaise?

Robert, my cousin's man, who was behind the carriage, and had been ignorant of our situation, till he heard my mother's scream, and found the horses running away, now jumped down, and came to the chaise door. Mr. Henry

Winterdale desired him to go back and see whether the post-boy was hurt ; and he soon returned with the agreeable tidings that he was safe. Mr. Henry then told us that he was at one of the windows of the inn in which the assembly-room was, when we set out, on our return ; that he saw the incapacity of the post-boy, and had walked by the side of the chaise, in his way home, to be at hand, in case of accident ; and that he would supply his place, if we would give him leave. We overwhelmed him with thanks, and not without reason ; for we soon after passed a stone quarry, into which a very little irregularity in the horses might have precipitated us.

The post-boy was left to the care of Robert, who led him to a house, to sober himself, till his chaise came back ; and Mr. Henry Winterdale set us down in safety, at our own door. My mother

hoped he would give her an opportunity to renew her thanks, at the Lodge. He replied that he was already overpaid by the pleasure of serving us; but that if he were so happy as to meet Miss Mereval and Miss Mowbray in their walks, he should rejoice to learn we had none of us suffered by our fright. He then wished us a good night.

The next morning our first visitors were Mrs. Thacker and Mr. Sharp. The lady inquired how we liked our last night's amusement, and we all professed to be pleased with it. "I told you," said she, "you would find it *wasly* pleasant. For my part, I'm *very* sorry there's no more assemblies this winter; for it's the only time we can all meet together, and enjoy ourselves. But we stopped a minute at the door, after we got home, continued she, and we never see nothing at all of you."

My mother then related the accident which had detained us. "O, Lord God," exclaimed Mrs. Thacker, "How shocking!" I told you what would come of *them* abominable *po-shays*; but you would not go with us!"

"O, dear, O, dear," cried Mr. Sharp, "I *niver* heard the like in all my life! I'm glad I was not with you; for I am so *debilitated* with nervous disorders, that I should have been frightened out of my wits! I am sure I should have fainted; for I have fainted, several times, at a less thing than that!"

"I am very glad too, if that is the case," said I, "for we should have been at a loss how to manage fainting gentlemen. We were more fortunate in meeting with one who could drive a pair of horses."

"Well," said Mr. Sharp, "now that, to me, is a very surprizing thing! I

have often wondered how gentlemen, that have been brought up in dining-rooms, and drawing-rooms, and not in stables, could *iver* be so bold and *venturesom* as to drive horses! If I was to come to go to drive a horse, I should be all of a tremble! I keep a carriage, as well as other gentlemen; but I'm sure I had rather trust to a good stout coachman than myself."

"You are a wise man," said I; "for you know yourself."

Captain Montgomery was then announced. Mr. Sharp told him the story of our return from the assembly. He blamed himself exceedingly, for not having attended us home, and said he envied the gentleman who had rendered us the assistance.

"Indeed, and so do not I," said Mr. Sharp! "I should have been in the chaise myself, only Mrs. Mereval durst not

trust me with the young ladies; and I am sure I should have squalled louder than she did! Nobody admires the ladies more than I do; but I had much *rether* dance with one of them than break my neck with her."

"So had I," said the captain; "but I should be glad to run any risk of breaking my own neck, to save her's."

"Aye, but I could not have saved her's, any more than my own, if the horses would overturn the carriage, you know."

"Not unless you could have done as the gentleman did; stopped them."

"O, dear me, sir, that would have been impossible! What would have been my strength, against the strength of two great horses? I might as well have tried to move the church, as stop them. Why sir, when I only came to

come to go down the dance, I was ready to drop!"

"If that is the case, sir," said Captain Montgomery, "I pity you."

This last flower of Mr. Sharp's rhetoric reminds me of part of a speech said to have been delivered in a debating society in London. The matter in debate was, "Which was the better to oil a man's wig with, honey, or mustard?" The orator on the honey side of the question got up, and made his speech. The advocate for mustard then rose, and began with, "For a man for to come, for to go, for to think, for to say, that honey is better to oil a man's wig with than mustard, is monstrous, absurd, and ridiculous, stupid and silly!"

The conversation continued some time longer. Eleanor grew uneasy, and looked repeatedly at her watch.

My mother observed it, and said, "Charlotte, it is your time to walk: I am sure Mrs. Thacker and these gentlemen will excuse you. We entertain no gentlemen," continued she; "but we shall be happy to see either of you, for a morning call, as often as it is agreeable to yourselves." They both begged permission to accompany us, in our walk; and each attached himself to his former partner; Mrs. Thacker sometimes joining the first couple, and sometimes the second. I had every reason to be content with my companion: poor Eleanor was sad; and, when we entered the wood, fixed her eyes on the end of the path, to see if our gallant knight had made his appearance. I had a glance of him, at the extremity of the wood; and so, I doubt not, had she; but he struck off into a different road, and deferred his enquiries whether we

had suffered from our fright, till another opportunity.

Our hour of walking is again arrived, and Eleanor urges me to go. Patience, my dear—I have only to tell Miss Castlemain that I am

Truly her's,

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

LETTER X.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Ravenhill Lodge, March 28, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

THIS week I have given to reading novels. Mr. Sharp sent his man to the town for a cargo of them, and, before he explored any of their contents, brought one to us. I took it up, and read it through. No matter what the name—it is not worth remembering. It is strange how novels possess me! Though the characters are not marked; though the events are improbable; though the language is not even grammatical, I have no repose till I see the hero and heroine fairly married; and, for that reason, I seldom trust myself with a

novel. Nor am I the only person under the influence of their magic spell. Our physician, in town, a very grave and learned man, and the author of a scientific work, once found me reading a novel; and acknowledged that he never ventured to begin one himself, as he should, assuredly, neglect his patients, till he had got to the end: and my mother was once in the library of the first philosopher the present age has produced; when observing the Arabian and Persian tales, and expressing some surprize at finding them in such a place, he told her he was particularly fond of them.

The second novel Mr. Sharp brought was *Amelia Mansfield*; translated from the French. I determined here to go on cautiously, and make reading only an interlude: but vain was my resolution. Once got into it, I stole it, while

my mother was at breakfast, and watched her tea-cup, that I might restore it when she had done. I then took up my needle, and seemed busily employed; but the instant the book was out of her hands, down went the work. When I drew towards the end of the last volume, I made right give way to possession, and carried it to our dressing-room, that I might indulge in all the luxury of woe. I had long foreseen that it could end only in death, or distraction. It is another *Eloise*, or another *Werter*. Great talents are necessary to write it; but it is great talents misapplied. Grave ladies would condemn the heroine, without mercy; and Mr. Sharp, who, by the bye, has no such thing as a heart, makes grimaces and says, "Nastiest, rankest stuff that *ever* I read in all my life!" It is certainly an improper picture of violent, uncon-

trouled passions ; but, to me, it has another fault—It is such a genuine representation of sensibility and distress, that, real or fictitious, it carries me with it, and wounds my heart. Could I have foreseen my sympathetic sufferings, I would have made no acquaintance with Amelia Mansfield.

I determined to read no more novels at present ; and kept this resolution like the last. Mr. Sharp put one into my hands, which he assured me was what he called the very best and *entertainingest novel* that *iver* he read in all his life ! Who, but must yield to such eloquence ? I read it ; and found his approbation would have been just, if it had been limited. It is a good novel ; but I should wrong it, to say the best *I* ever read in my life. The idea is new ; and the hero such a prodigy, that he lives through three volumes, without being in love. 'The title is "Independence."

In the walk we took, after I had concluded my last, we met Mr. Henry Winterdale. He joined us, and walked with us an hour—one of the pleasantest hours I ever spent. He is well informed on every subject, as far as my faculties of judging can decide, and is a man of great taste and feeling--rather serious--but who could be otherwise, with such a father? Whether he had his father in his head, I know not; I am sure I had him in mine; and fancied that, if we should chance to meet him, he would look upon us as the seducers of his son. .

After this walk we saw Mr. Henry Winterdale no more, of several days; though, before it, we never missed him. We began to think we were like the maids that were held out for our imitation, in the nursery—to be seen, and not be heard; and that he did not find our conversation equal to our appear-

ance: but one day we were caught in a heavy shower—where he sprang from, I know not—he certainly was near; for, in a moment, he overtook us, and begged we would accept of his umbrella. We would have declined it, on account of leaving its owner exposed to the rain; but he would not be denied. He attended us home; and, wet as he was, seemed to think the way too short; but he took leave of us at the door, saying he would now go and change his cloaths. Since then we have not seen him. He seems determined to render us every service in his power, and not to be acquainted with us.

Not so Captain Montgomery. He has been here three times this week; and says that nothing but the fear of being troublesome could have prevented him from coming every day. We yet know nothing of his family. Many art-

ful girls would have led to the subject, and drawn from him all they desired to know; but it is not in my nature; nor dare I suffer my mother to do it, lest he should imagine she has some view regarding myself. That he distinguishes me from Eleanor is an undoubted fact; and that I do not feel so light-hearted as when I had nothing to do but gather snow-drops, is another.

Light or heavy, and at all times, your's is the heart of

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

LETTER XI.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Ravenhill Lodge, Apl. 4, 1812.

WHICH, my dear Harriet, in the catalogue of human events, do you think capable of bringing Mr. Winterdale to our house? not like Captain Montgomery, for a morning call; but a positive inmate; eating, drinking, and sleeping under our roof? You are mute with astonishment at length you answer, "A broken leg, perhaps." Your conjecture is exactly right. Mr. Winterdale had the *mis*-fortune to have his horse fall down with him, flat on one side; by which accident the leg that lay under the horse was bro-

ken: and he had the *good* fortune to have it happen just before our windows; by which situation he found help at hand. We saw the fall with terror. His own man, Mendall, was with him, and we sent out Robert to assist. They carried Mr. Winterdale into the house, in a state of insensibility, and laid him on a bed.

Now all was bustle. My mother and Mendall stationed themselves in the chamber, making every effort to recover the hurt man; Horton ran up and down stairs, to furnish them with the means; Robert was dispatched to the town, for all the surgeons he could find; Thomas was sent for Mr. Henry Winterdale; and Eleanor and I were ordering, and the women servants providing, whatever we judged might be of use.

Mr. Winterdale soon recovered his

senses ; being only stunned by the fall ; but, as his first effort was to escape from the assistants, he discovered that his leg was broken. He then insisted upon being carried home. Here my mother interposed, with an air of authority, and said, indeed she could not suffer him to be moved, till she had heard the opinion of the surgeons ; as she considered herself responsible for his safety at present ; and Mendall joining her, he submitted.

When the surgeons arrived, they proposed setting the fractured limb immediately ; as, if it were delayed, an inflammation must ensue, that would prevent it for some time. My mother was decidedly of the same opinion, and earnestly requested Mr. Winterdale to believe himself at home ; assuring him that it would be a pleasure to her to supply all his wants. She then

left him in the hands of the surgeons ; assisted by his son, who had arrived some time before, and by Mendall.

The operation performed, Mr. Winterdale was put to bed ; where he has lain three days in a state of great suffering. He is now in a fair way. Mendall sleeps in the same room, and is generally with him in the day ; Mr. Henry spends much time with his father ; and my mother, without sending to know whether she can be admitted, assumes the privilege of a nurse ; and tapping at the door, enters, without ceremony ; orders all things necessary for the invalid ; takes her post at his bed's head ; and contributes, herself, to his comfort. This is the only way : for I do not believe there is written, in the book of fate, any method to become acquainted with Mr. Winterdale, with his own consent.

Mr. Henry stepped into the breakfast-room, this morning, where Eleanor and I were sitting at work, and hearing that his father was better, and that my mother was with him, he ventured to sit down.

“We are two to one,” said I; “are not you afraid we shall keep you prisoner?”

“One would be sufficient to do that,” replied he.

Eleanor coloured, and worked very hard.

“I think as Mr. Winterdale is likely to get well,” continued I, “that we are much obliged to his horse for breaking his leg; for I believe his two legs, if they had been whole, would never have brought him to our house; and then you would not have come of course, you know.”

“I know I should have been the suf-

ferer, if I had not," said he ; " and so much a sufferer, that, I believe, I should have broken through the savage resolution I had formed to deny myself the pleasure of your and Miss Mowbray's acquaintance."

" Savage, indeed," cried I ! " I should not have supposed you capable of it, by your looks. Should you, Eleanor ?"

" I should not suppose Mr. Henry Winterdale capable of doing what he thought wrong," said Eleanor.

" It follows, then," said I, " that Mr. Henry Winterdale thought it wrong to seek our society ; or even to accept our invitations—may I ask why ?"

" Ah ! Miss Mereval," said he, " if you knew how I was situated, " you would not ask why ! But you cannot have been so long at the Lodge without having heard of some of the singulari-

ties of my father. You must know that he has renounced all society, and lives in a style very unsuitable to his rank ; and though he has not verbally required such a sacrifice ; yet, unless I could act consistently with my station in life, I think it better to conform to his plans."

" If our parents are not all we could wish," said Eleanor, " it cannot absolve us from the duty we owe them. I do not know a better rule for the regulation of our conduct, than to do right ourselves, and leave to others the pains and penalties of doing wrong."

" I would make it my rule," said Henry. " Happily for us, the right is easily discovered. In general, intuition, conscience, or by what other name you please to call it, will point it out, before reason is asked. The only difficulty lies in pursuing what is right, when

passion or interest throw stumbling blocks in our way."

"There are many things," said Eleanor, "that are indifferent in themselves; and, of these, each of us should be our own judge. I would carry this a step further, and allow every one to choose, even in opposition to that strongest of all obligations — custom; though, I own, I had rather not do so myself."

"You are making an apology for my father," rejoined Mr. Henry, "that I have often made before. I have said to myself, my father has inherited a fortune from his ancestors, which always entailed upon them a certain style of living. They have always maintained something like the same establishment, and kept something like the same company. It is well; and I would do so too. But who shall say there is a ne-

cessity to do so? Why may I not enjoy what is my own, in my own way? There can be but one solid objection against it—the man who lives *by* himself, and *for* himself, does not do the good he ought, to his fellow creatures; but for that he stands responsible to a higher power; not to me. Besides, of the numbers who enjoy their fortunes in a splendid manner, how many are there who go beyond them? who are not even just? who owe what they cannot, or will not pay, and thereby ruin whole families?”

Here *I* blushed.

“Justice,” said Eleanor, “is the foundation of all the virtues. Nothing can be virtuous that is unjust. I have been sorry to hear Charles Surface say that he could not make justice keep pace with generosity; and I have been

grieved to hear such a sentiment applauded."

"Yet it is the general opinion of mankind," said Mr. Henry. "The man who pays all his debts, and neither spends money unnecessarily, or gives it away, is covetous, and a miser; shunned by, if he do not shun, society; while the man who enjoys and dispenses liberally, what is not his own, is an honest fellow."

"I have always thought the term, covetous, misapplied," said I. "It should properly belong to the sin forbidden by the tenth Commandment, and be attached to those who covet their neighbour's goods; instead of which, it is commonly given to such as only wish to keep their own."

"The one, if his propensities broke out into acts, would be hanged for a

thief," said Mr. Henry Winterdale; "the other only does not do the good he might, and therefore ought to do."

"While you acknowledge that Mr. Winterdale's mode of life would not be your's," said Eleanor, "how cheering to your bosom must be your filial obedience! I never, added she, with a sigh, knew the pleasure of filial obedience! I had the misfortune to lose both my parents, when I was between four and five years old."

"I cannot remember my mother," said Mr. Henry; "but I have been told she was one of the most excellent of women. How should I have loved and revered such a parent, if she had been spared to me! But, perhaps, added he, sighing in his turn, it is better as it is. With regard to my obedience to my father, it may not have all

the merit you so kindly allow it. I have, hitherto, had little temptation to act contrary to his wishes ; and, if it were otherwise, I am denied the means without having recourse to expedients I should be ashamed of."

Ah! thought I, while my face glowed, better not have six-pence in one's pocket than procure money as I have done! But, rallying my spirits, " we have now brought you to a fair confession," said I, " of the reason why you declined our acquaintance. You had little reason to act contrary to Mr. Winterdale's wishes."

" Pardon me," replied he, with quickness, " It was there I first felt the misery of passive obedience."

My mother then entering the room, and telling Mr. Henry his father had enquired for him, put an end to the con-

versation ; as I will do to my letter,
when I have assured you that

I am, faithfully your's,

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

LETTER XII.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Ravenhill Lodge, April 11, 1812.

BEHOLD, Harriet, the reward of my patience ! Here have I walked quietly, with Eleanor, scraping acquaintance with all the flowers of the field ! Here have I been contented with their company for hours, after I returned home ! And now, Captain Montgomery to ride with us ; Edmund Sharp, Esquire, to walk with us ; Mr. Henry Winterdale to sit with us ; and no female in the world—that is, in our part of the world, to dispute the prize with us !

My mother is blest with the private conversation of Mr. Winterdale. As to Mr. and Mrs. Thacker, they have

given official notice, by Mr. Sharp, that they cannot enter the house, while Mr. Winterdale is in it : and happy is it for the poor gentleman that such is their determination ; for, if he knew he was breathing the same air with the parson, his agitation would be sufficient to snap his leg a second time.

I have at length made the interesting discovery that Mr. Montgomery is the only son of the present Sir James Montgomery, who has taken my father's title. This morning, as we were airing, my horse was in so frolicsome a mood, that, tired with his capering, and with pulling him in, I suffered him to take his own way ; and he set off at a quicker rate than Eleanor chose to follow. No cavalier could have been so uncourteous as not to have extended his arms, if I should chance to fall ; so the gentleman accompanied me, and we

left my cousin, attended by her man, behind. That service, however, did not fall to the lot of Mr. Montgomery. My horse and I adjusted matters amicably, and slackened our pace to our mutual satisfaction.

Mr. Montgomery took the opportunity, while we were riding slowly, that Eleanor might overtake us, to say, that he owed it to the politeness and friendship he had found in our family, to let us know on whom we had bestowed them. His father, he said, had gone to India more than thirty years ago, without either fortune or expectation; that he had married one of those young ladies who are sent over by their parents, in search of an establishment, which their circumstances do not permit them to provide for them at home; that they had remained in India till very lately, when Mr. Montgomery determined to

bring over his family and effects, and end his days in his native country. He added that his father had not made the fortune that had fallen to the lot of many; both because his post had been less lucrative, and because he did not choose to employ such means as they had done. With it, however, such as it was, and the pleasing reflections that the manner in which it had been acquired afforded him, he would have been content; but he had unfortunately entrusted a part of his property in a ship, which sailed before he left the country, and which had been lost. “What remained,” continued Mr. Montgomery, “my father did not think sufficient for my establishment in life, without the addition of some profession; and he bought me a pair of colours.

“Then you are not a captain,” said I?

“I am not,” replied he; “nor would I have suffered you to call me by that appellation so long; but that the courtesy of country towns makes all red coats captains, as well as all apothecaries doctors. I assure you the deception is not of my own creating. I never called myself a captain; and now, that I am more desirous of engaging your esteem than when I knew you less, I will not be known to you for other than I am.”

“I have one more circumstance to mention,” continued Mr. Montgomery. “My father is descended from a branch of the family of the late Sir George Montgomery. When he left England, Sir George and his brother were both young; and there were several other

persons between him and the title and estate ; so that the succession to either was quite out of the question. It appeared, on his return, however, that Sir George was dead, and had left an only daughter ; and that, in consequence of this and other deaths which had happened, my father had an undoubted right to the title ; and he has accordingly assumed it. He believes he has an equal right to the estate, and is endeavouring to prove it. I own I am sorry for this, whatever be the event. If he lose his cause, it must considerably lessen a fortune already too small ; if he gain it, he must dispossess a young woman—I am told, a beautiful and amiable young woman, who certainly has a natural right to her father's inheritance ; let law say what it may."

In an extasy of gratitude, I repeated four lines of a song in the Duenna.

Thou canst not boast of fortune's store,
My love, while me they wealthy call ;
But I am glad to find thee poor ;
For, with my heart, I'll give thee all.

Do not be too much alarmed, my dear Harriet. I repeated these lines to myself—not to Mr. Montgomery. In the first place, it is not certain that I shall have any thing to give ; and, in the second, if it were, I would not dispose of it so hastily. I only thanked Mr. Montgomery for his confidence, and applauded his sentiments—and, for that, I had more reasons than one, you know. But he is, really, a very pretty fellow ; and a very honest fellow. In the words of Mistress Mouse, “ Shall I have him, if I can ? ” It would be a good deed ; if it were only to cheat the lawyers. I will think of it. “ I do not doubt it,” say you.

Eleanor then rode up, and the conversation took another turn.

Our patient is doing well, and sits up in his bed. We have not yet had the honour of being introduced to him ; but as his son is become one of the family, we the less regret that misfortune. For my part, if the father do but recover, I care not how slowly.

Ever your's,

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

LETTER XIII.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Ravenhill Lodge, April 18, 1812.

MY promise to write every week, my dear Harriet, must either give me the liberty of sometimes writing very short letters ; or you the mortification of reading very uninteresting ones. You are not to expect a gentleman should break his leg, and be carried into our house, once a week, to supply me with a subject ; or that I should as often discover a new cousin. The only circumstance I have now to inform you of is, that I have seen Mr. Winterdale. We were introduced to him, as Horton told Robinson, at my mother's request ; not his own. My mother presented us to him

as her daughter and her niece : and added, “ I would not have suffered these young women to intrude upon you, if they had been like the generality of giddy girls ; but you will find them so quiet and discreet that I hope you will sometimes allow them to pay their respects to you.”

The man looked at us, for a moment, as if he would have penetrated our very souls ; then bowed, and said nothing.

We had had an excellent hint. It was our business to be *quiet* and *discreet* ; so we said nothing.

My mother, who, I dare say, had frequently evinced her *quietness* and *discretion* before, did not contradict it now ; so we all said nothing.

Mr. Winterdale looked very uneasy. He broke the silence by observing that it was poor entertainment for young ladies, to sit by a lame man in bed ; par-

ticularly such a man as he, who had not been used to company.

Eleanor said we did not, by any means, seek our own entertainment, in waiting upon him ; she had, all her life been accustomed to provide a great part of it for herself, as well as he ; but she was glad of an opportunity of expressing the pleasure she felt at his being, so far, recovered from his accident.

He looked at her, with a scrutinizing eye ; but, seeing nothing like deceit in her sweet face, he thanked her with some cordiality.

“ We none of us derive our amusements from company,” said my mother. “ It was to avoid that we came into the country.”

“ The little I have seen of company,” said Eleanor, “ I always thought was purchased at more than it was worth. I am not acquainted with society in

London ; but, in the country I have often spent an hour in dressing, in order to spend two or three hours with people whom I have been heartily glad to be released from."

" That has been just my case," said Mr. Winterdale ; " though I wonder to hear such a sentiment from a young lady. When I have formerly been induced to visit a neighbouring family, I have found so little to repay the trouble, that I resolved to give it up. If a man wants a good dinner, he may get it at home : if he wants good wine, he may get that too ; and without being obliged to take more than he likes : and as to conversation, at dinner it is all about eating ; after dinner it is all noise ; and after tea it is all cards."

" But you would sometimes find conversation of a different kind ; would not you, Sir," demanded I ?

“ Yes,” answered Mr. Winterdale. “ I might listen to the exploits of a man’s dogs or horses, and pretend to admire what I did not care for. I might dispute upon politics till both sides were ready to quarrel. I might hear the domestic affairs of every family in the neighbourhood : so I thought it best to stay at home, and take care of my own.”

“ That is a subject which cannot be otherwise than acceptable,” said my mother.

“ And it will pay a man for his attention,” rejoined Mr. Winterdale.

“ I am of your opinion, Sir,” said I, “ that one of the heaviest taxes society has to pay is that of listening to what we had rather not hear, and admiring what one cannot like.”

“ Women are subjected to another tax,” said Eleanor, “ and, perhaps men

are not wholly exempted from it ; that of contributing our share of what is not worth hearing. I do not know so fatiguing an exertion, as talking when one has nothing to say."

" You can have nothing to say, in common companies, in the country," said Mr. Winterdale, " unless you will reply to other people's affairs, by talking of your own."

" The most desirable society," said my mother, " is that of a friend, to whom our own concerns may be interesting ; and for whose welfare we feel an interest, in return."

" I do not know where you will find such a friend," said Mr. Winterdale.

" I flatter myself," said I, " that Miss Mowbray and I have each found such a friend in the other."

" Miss Mowbray and you are very young women," replied Mr. Winter-

dale. "Let one of you be more admired than the other; let one of you be preferred by the man you are both desirous to please; let one of you be well, and the other ill-married; let one of you become poor, while the other remains rich; then see what will become of your friendship!"

I had like to have forfeited my character for quietness and discretion; for I could not help exclaiming, "What a frightful catalogue of evils!"

"Some of them prudence may prevent; and may heaven avert the rest," said Eleanor!

"In London," said Mr. Winterdale, "though I know very little of it, I suppose the number of public places, and the number of people who frequent them, furnish topics of conversation; and the multitudes that now meet at the houses

of the great have rendered them public places: but, in the country, when you first meet, nobody has any thing to say; and, when you have been together some time, every body is for speaking at once. The only way in which, I think, society could be tolerable, would be, for a man to sit silent, half a day together, if he felt no inclination to speak; and to rise from his chair, and go to the window, or leave the room whenever another was saying what he had no mind to hear."

"Those would be happy days, indeed, Sir," said Eleanor; "but, as we cannot hope for them, I think I should have no objection to a general acquaintance, at my first entrance into the world, to give me an opportunity of selecting those I might like best. I should be very fortunate if I could find

six or eight families, with whom I could associate upon easy terms ; who would be my guests for days, weeks, or months, as it might happen ; and be glad to see me sometimes theirs. I would have no dinner parties. They are a sacrifice of time and money to vanity. I should not expect my chosen acquaintance to be my friends, in the strict sense of the word ; but we might be agreeable to each other, without an effort : and I would leave them to entertain themselves in their own way."

" I like your plan, Eleanor," said I : a sort of Harrowgate society ; where some might read or work, while others walked or rode out. It approaches nearer Mr. Winterdale's idea than any thing I know."

" The difficulty would be to reduce it to practice," said Mr. Winterdale ;

“not to find the people ; but to find them agreeable : to say nothing of the expense of turning one’s house into an inn.”

“I am supposing, Sir,” said Eleanor, “that the expense were considerably within my income, or I should not attempt it : and, perhaps, it might not be much greater than to cover your table with a profusion of dainties, and an abundance of wine, at stated intervals, for all the people within ten miles of you.”

“If there was a necessity to spend the money in one or the other,” rejoined Mr. Winterdale, “your’s is the best way.”

“You are arguing with Mr. Winterdale on his dislike to company, while we are fatiguing him with our own,” said my mother.

We then left Mr. Winterdale to his own reflections; as I will leave you, when I have assured you that I am,

Truly your's,

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

LETTER XIV.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN,

Ravenhill Lodge, April 25, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

I cannot help fancying that my mother has a mind to set her widow's coif at Mr. Winterdale, and I have communicated my suspicions to Eleanor, who entertains similar ones herself. While we were not of the party, we supposed that the want of employment, and the desire of moulding the iron heart of Mr. Winterdale into a neighbourly pliability, had transformed the gay lady Montgomery into a nurse. When we were first admitted, we perceived her wish that we should gain a share of his good opi-

nion, and her anxious fear lest we should say any thing that might prove us undeserving of it, together with a very guarded conduct of her own.

We now visit Mr. Winterdale every day, and I perceive my mother watches the symptoms of satisfaction or uneasiness that prevail in his countenance, and regulates our stay by these tokens. She is, herself, almost constantly in his room, with no other attendant than Horton. Mendall is dismissed, to mind affairs at home. Mr. Henry is here the whole of the morning ; but, what with giving us a call before he goes up stairs, and bidding us farewell when he comes down, he is more with us than with his father.

My mother seems to be making a systematic attack upon Mr. Winter-

dale. To speak in a military phrase, she has drawn a line of circumvallation about him, which she is advancing by imperceptible degrees, in hopes the besieged may be compelled to surrender. How should I laugh to see the poor, unsuspecting gentleman taken captive! the wise, the prudent, the wary, Mr. Winterdale caught in a trap! the man who has lived only for himself, sighing for a woman! O, triumphant woman, what can thy beauty and thy arts not effect, if they can compass this!

But what can my mother mean to do with Mr. Winterdale, when she has caught him? Does she intend to divert herself with seeing him struggle in his chains, and then let him go? or can she seriously think of marrying him? Though I laugh at the idea of his circumspection being outwitted;

yet, I assure you, I should approve of neither. To marry any man, in my mother's circumstances, without making him acquainted with them, would be worse than artful; it would be base; and Mr. Winterdale would be the last man upon earth to marry her, if they were known. To trifle with any man's feelings, without an intention of rewarding them, is almost equally unjustifiable. It is true, I believe, that the feelings of Mr. Winterdale are of a calcareous substance; and his heart-strings, if he has any, of tough, endurable leather; but even these should not be wantonly played upon for her amusement.

Mr. Winterdale is got to the sofa. We were all sitting in his room last night, when my mother proposed a rubber at whist.

“It is a long time since I played at

whist," said Mr. Winterdale. "I like the game well enough, but I do not like to risque my money at it. I always thought it absurd to try to better my fortune, by means that were as likely to diminish it; when there were ways to increase it with certainty."

"O," said my mother, "I cannot bear to play for money. It was merely *pour passer le tems* that I mentioned it. We will either play for sixpences, or, as the country people say here, for love, which you please."

"For sixpence the rubber then," said Mr. Winterdale, "without playing the points. One should have some stake, to engage one's attention."

"Then love is not sufficient to engage your attention, Sir, without a little money," said I smiling?

"I hope you will find it so bye and

bye," replied he. "You see love and nothing are synonymous terms."

"If you have no objection," said my mother, "you and I will endeavour to beat these young folks, without taking our chance for partners."

Mr. Winterdale could have no objection; but, as fortune would have it, the young folks beat them. His anxiety was extreme, and his disappointment in proportion. Had he staked a year's revenue on the rubber, instead of sixpence, he could scarcely have felt it more. My mother seemed to repent her experiment, and joined him in lamenting their hard fate. The next rubber was their's, and wore off the effects of the former. But—would you credit it? my mother begged us, this morning, not to irritate our guest, by winning his money; as the

party was made solely to amuse him, in his confinement; but rather suffer him to win our's. I willingly consent to it, for I should fear one of his sixpences would contaminate my purse. But, take care, Mr. Winterdale; or you will, one day, pay dear for this child-like indulgence.

When Mr. Henry called this morning, "The doctors give us no hopes," said I, with a sorrowful countenance; "your father will be well soon, and all these days of kindness will be forgotten."

"Never, by me, while I have breath," replied he.

"Why, is it possible," demanded I, "that you can visit us, when Mr. Winterdale is returned home?"

"I hope the treatment my father has met with here," answered he, "will produce a change both in his feelings,

and his way of life. His heart must be most impenetrable ; it could not even be human ; if he were insensible of the kindness of Mrs. Mereval ; or ungrateful for it. He speaks of her in very high terms ; and I have no doubt that it will be his greatest pleasure to cultivate a friendship so honourable and so advantageous to himself."

"Do you think," said Eleanor, "after such a long seclusion from the world, that Mr. Winterdale can ever voluntarily seek society?"

"A month ago, I think he could not," answered Henry ; "but having once found the charm of it, I think it will be as impossible for him to relinquish it. My father has an activity both of body and mind, that prevented him from languishing in solitude. He felt no want of company ; and most

assuredly, would neither have sought it, or admitted it; but the pleasures of agreeable society and reciprocal kindness, being forced upon him, they would make a stronger impression on his heart, from their being new; and, having once tasted them, I cannot believe he can give them up. The only fear that rests upon my mind is, lest Mrs. Mereval should withdraw her kindness, when her patient no longer stands in need of it."

"I have no fear of that," replied I.

"Then," said Eleanor to Mr. Henry, "if one can promise for his father, and the other for her mother, we may still hope for the pleasure of seeing you."

"Nothing but the positive commands of one, or all of you ladies, could prevent that," he said, "and I should then find submission a harder task than ever I did in my life."

“ You forget that your father’s commands might prevent it,” said I.

“ They could have no such power,” answered he. “ I am three and twenty ; and, in such a case, I should certainly judge for myself.”

“ Then you either practice filial obedience, when your own inclinations do not oppose it,” said I, “ or you think three and twenty the age to discard it wholly.”

“ Pardon me, Miss Mereval,” said he, “ you are too severe. I make a distinction between what I conceive to be my father’s rights and my own. In his own house, and of his own conduct, who should be master but my father ? Imagine me saying, ‘ Sir, you ought to keep such an establishment, such an equipage, and such company ; and you ought to like these things, because I should like them.

Further, you ought to allow me a certain portion of your own money, to dispose of in whatever manner I please, whether you like it or no.' What a figure should I make, thus invading the rights of another? But suppose my father attacking mine; suppose him saying, 'Henry, I insist upon it that you go no more to Mrs. Mereval's;' I should first respectfully inquire his reasons for the prohibition. In what have they offended you, Sir? Of what have they been guilty? 'Nothing of this,' he would reply, (for nothing could be urged) 'but you know I do not like company; and, now, I am recovered, and got home, I shall live as I did before the accident.' Do you believe I would regard such an order, supported by such reasons? No more than the wind that whistled over my head. To resume his former

way of life, or not, would be my father's to determine : to deprive myself of the friendship of Mrs. Mereval, and you and Miss Mowbray, or not, would be mine ; and no earthly power could compel me to it, but your own. In such a cause, I would risque every hope of the favour and inheritance of my father."

There was a dignity in Mr. Henry's sentiments and manner that struck us with awe ; the dignity of independence. Eleanor hung down her head, afraid to look at him ; while a charming blush stole over her cheeks. I shrunk into myself ; and found, fatally found, that something *could be urged against us*.

When he left us, I went up stairs, and throwing myself upon my knees, in the bitterness of my heart, I cried, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am not

worthy to be called thy child. Assist me in the resolution I make before thee, never again, wilfully, to do what I know to be wrong."

My present interest, would prompt me to this vow, were the future entirely out of the question; for, by some fatality or other, every person I converse with plants a thorn in my bosom.

Continue your friendship and regard for

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

LETTER XV.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Ravenhill Lodge, May 2, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

Our patient begins to use his leg; but shews no inclination to move it out of the house. My mother's designs are more apparent, as she becomes more confident of success. Her attentions are openly directed to Mr. Winterdale, in a manner that cannot be mistaken; and his tenderness, in return, is of the most awkward kind you can imagine—that of a stubborn, unbending, untrouled mind, yielding to affection, in spite of itself. His expressions of it are such as, in another, might be termed rudeness, and abruptness; but, from

him, they mean a great deal ; perhaps, nothing less than the offer of his hand.

Now, what is my part ? here, two duties clash. If I consider Mr. Winterdale, shall I stand by, and see him imposed upon ? If I look at my mother, have I a right to betray her ? I am supposing she has formed the plan of marrying him, without acknowledging she has involved herself in debt, which, I fear is more likely than that she should candidly confess it ; for such a circumstance ; so totally repugnant to every one of his principles and propensities, must put an end to her hopes. Mr. Winterdale is just ; though parsimonious : his justice would revolt at her conduct : and he, who cannot spend his own money, would abhor the woman who could spend what was not her's, and surely would not render himself liable to pay it.

After some reflection, I have determined, first to remonstrate with my mother, and then to be silent. She shall not take so unworthy a step, without my entering my protest against it, in the strongest terms a child can use to a parent. If this avail not, I will be aiding and abetting in no deceit; and I will make no discovery. I will stand aloof, and leave the issue to themselves. Though my mother may be artful, Mr. Winterdale is eagle-eyed, and may, by his own foresight, escape the snare. He cannot marry my mother, without the disclosure of her real name; and this would probably lead to a discovery of her situation. In that case, I must bear my part of shame, for the past—but a part of no more faults—if I can help it.

O, Harriet, I begin to see the consequences of my error! I fear I shall

lose my vivacity ; the flow of spirits which should carry me through the world ! and, dreadful to say, I fear I shall condemn my mother.

I have not, of late, mentioned Mr. Montgomery. He visits us, without ceasing, and his looks and actions declare his partiality to me ; though his words have not made the most distant allusion to it : and how can they, when he knows not whom it is, that he regards ? Ought I not to repay his honest frankness by saying, “ I am your cousin ; the presumptive heiress of an estate your father is endeavouring to wrest from me ? ” If, then, his love were serious, and mine could be gained, in return, what more obvious than a union of our interests ? But then I have the humiliating, the destroying confession to make——“ I have lived beyond the income allowed by my guar-

dians! I have borrowed money of usurers! I am hiding my head, and disowning my name, till I see the event of my contest with your father!" What honest man could take me to his bosom, after this? and what prudent father would consent to it, if he could?

In how different a light do I now view my conduct, from that in which it appeared to me at the time! I then thought I was only anticipating a small part of future abundance, to supply present necessity: now, it seems, that I may have been robbing another, and subjecting myself to the horrors of a prison. The robbery may be ideal, if things come to the worst; but I assure you the prison is not. When I come of age, I shall be called upon to pay a serious sum; and, if I lose my cause, I have no means to pay it. The very trade of my creditors; the hazards they

run ; make them relentless. While my suit is pending, they may spare me, for their own sakes ; but if it be once decided against me, I can hope for no mercy.

My ruin involves that of my mother. Her jointure nothing can touch, during her life ; but the five hundred pounds a year she has received for my board and education must be restored, if Sir James should prove himself the right owner of the Montgomery estate. Nothing could be mine, but the personal estate of my father. At first it was considerable, but where is it now ? dissipated a thousand ways : and of whom could I demand it ? of my own mother.

When I said there were two sorts of things I would not grieve for—those I could help, and those I could not help, I forgot a third, and the most

oppressive—those I might have helped, and did not.

Eleanor, from whom I do not conceal a thought, endeavours to comfort me, by reminding me that I ought not to estimate my fault by its present appearance ; that it could neither be foreseen or imagined a competitor would arise for what was then indisputably mine ; and, finally, that this unexpected claim may be a wise and merciful dispensation of providence, to save me from recurring to an expedient which might have led me to disgrace and ruin.

I will not trouble you with any more of my melancholy reflections : and, at present, I can write nothing which is not of the same cast.

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

LETTER XVI.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Ravenhill Lodge, May 9, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

MY conjectures were too true. Last night, after supper, my mother began by saying, "Charlotte, I wish to have a little conversation with you."

Eleanor rose, to leave the room.

"No, sit down," said my mother. "I look upon you as a second daughter. I have nothing to say to Charlotte that I do not wish you to hear."

Eleanor sat down. My mother seemed a little at a loss how to proceed; but, after a moment's pause, she said, "In using every means to humanize Mr. Winterdale, and to contribute to his comfort, I have, unexpectedly made a

conquest of him. These men generally run from one extreme to the other."

"I believe it is very natural," said I.

"Perhaps it is," continued my mother. "I thought I observed his partiality some time ago; but, last week he made me an earnest offer of himself; and ever since has been endeavouring to obtain my consent to our marriage."

My mother stopped. Eleanor and I remained silent.

"I certainly never intended to venture upon a second marriage," continued she; "but I thought, Charlotte, I would ask your advice."

"My advice is that you keep your resolution," said I.

"Such, I suppose, would be the general opinion of grown-up daughters, with regard to their mothers; however

they might think for themselves. But my sentiments are, that Mr. Winterdale, with six thousand pounds a year, is not to be rejected without some deliberation."

"You could not marry Mr. Winterdale, Madam, without, telling him who you are?"

"I have already told him," replied my mother.

"And what is his opinion," demanded I, "of a woman who assumes a borrowed name, and flies to a distant part of the kingdom, to avoid her creditors?"

"It was not necessary to ask his opinion upon that point," answered my mother; "any more than it was for you to ask so impertinent a question. There are other reasons sufficient to account for our leaving town, and changing our name. If I were tired of our expen-

sive way of living ; of our parties, and public places ; and chose to retire into the country, and adopt a different way of life ; my own inclination is a sufficient motive : I need not assign any cause for that inclination."

" Is such an inclination a sufficient motive for assuming a feigned name," said I ?

" Certainly," replied my mother. " Do you think some of the friends of Lady Montgomery would not have found her out, in the country, and broken in upon her plans ?"

" Indeed, I fear they would," said I, with a deep sigh ; " and I fear it still."

" It would be to get rid of the apprehension you allude to, and which haunts me, as well as yourself, that I might be brought to listen to Mr. Winterdale."

" You surely would not marry him,

Madam, without informing him how much you are in debt?"

"How could I do that, when I do not know myself?"

"But you could give him information of the fact; though not of the particulars."

"Do you think he would retain his good opinion of me, if I did?"

"He would not. But what is the good opinion worth that is not founded upon truth, and that can only last till the cheat is discovered?"

"Allow me to tell you, Miss Montgomery, that you make use of very extraordinary language to your mother."

"Pardon me, dear Madam," said I: "my nature revolts against it; but consider, pray consider, that the world will give it no milder a name; and that the hatred and contempt of Mr. Win-

terdale, himself, must be the consequence of such a trick."

"Again," exclaimed my mother! "The world's opinion I little care for: and as to Mr. Winterdale's opinion, when the discovery is made; we must fight it out, like other married people, and when we are both tired, we may sit down and be friends."

"My dear mother," said I, "if you set the world at nought, and believe you can manage Mr. Winterdale; is the peace of your own bosom; is the approbation of your own conscience, of no value?"

"Conscience is a fine thing to talk of," replied my mother, "and when it can be pleased I admire it. But do you think my conscience is easy now? do not I owe money which I cannot pay? am not I between two evils, and

should, therefore chuse the least? shall I remain indebted to a number of poor trades-people, whose families are suffering for the loss? or shall I compel a man to pay them, who has been long hoarding money, for no earthly purpose, but to look at it?"

"If you take my advice," said I, "you shall not repair one error, by committing another. It is the usual consequence of faults to lead to faults; but, be the result what it might, I would stop short at the first."

"You that can so readily tell me what I ought not to do," said my mother, "tell me what I can do."

"Openly confess your situation to Mr. Winterdale," said I, "Tell him you cannot impose upon him. Tell him you sought the shelter of Ravenhill Lodge for security to yourself, not to deceive others; and, least of all him,

who professes a regard for you. Tell him that you are laying by the superfluous part of your income, towards retrieving your affairs, and that if my father's estate be awarded to me, I shall supply the rest. If he has any generosity your ingenuous conduct will not go unrequited ; if he has not, let him go ; and by steadily persevering in a system of economy, we may, at some future time, look the world in the face."

"Yes," said my mother, "by the time I am threescore. You who expect Montgomery to rescue you from obscurity, may talk of economy and perseverance ; but what is to become of me ? Am I to grow grey at a lodge, which is never visited by any human being, but the 'squire and the parson, and not even by these together, till your chancery suit is decided ? and ever after, if it be decided against you ?

unless, indeed, I were hunted out of it, and obliged to board with some village curate, at fifty pounds a year, while my jointure were appropriated to the discharge of my debts !”

“Montgomery,” replied I, “has never spoken to me of love—but, if he loved me to distraction, and I loved him no less; and if his father stood by, intreating me to accept his son; I would sooner die in such a retreat as you mention, than marry him, till I had made a full confession of my folly.”

“And I never will add that folly to my others,” said my mother. “But, perhaps, you, who have such a taste for acknowledging errors, may take upon you to disclose mine ?”

“No,” replied I: “I conceive it would be unbecoming your daughter to expose the faults of her parent;

but in you it would be just to reveal your own. I would fain say noble ; but it is no more than just. I once more beseech you, my dear mother, do not ruin your future peace, both as it regards Mr. Winterdale and yourself, by such unworthy duplicity !”

“ Have I not answered your *beseechments*, already,” said my mother ? “ Have I not told you that I think it less dishonourable to discharge my debts with money which will be my own, than to remain in a situation in which I cannot discharge them ? and, as to Mr. Winterdale, I think the widow of Sir George Montgomery, with my person, and a jointure of a thousand pounds a year, is a very good match for him ; if she do owe a little money. Besides, am not I ten or a dozen years younger than he ? and ought he not to pay for that ?”

“Possibly he might be of your opinion,” said I, “if he were acquainted with the truth.”

“That is a hazard I again tell you I will not run,” answered my mother.

“Are you not afraid,” said I, “that chance may make the discovery, before the marriage can take place?”

“I must trust to chance for that,” replied my mother. “If it should, Mr. Winterdale must either exercise his generosity or his prudence; and I must evince either my gratitude or my patience.”

“Would not you think it right,” said Eleanor, “to inform him of the chancery suit?”

“I have done it,” answered my mother; “and I believe his earnest desire to have the management of a suit in chancery is one of his inducements to make proposals to me.”

My mother then rung the bell for Horton, and retired.

Eleanor and I looked at each other, for some moments, in silence; at length I said, "So you see her ladyship has asked my advice just when she was determined to do as she pleased!"

"That is the proper time to ask advice," said Eleanor. "If you happen to be of the opinion of the person who asks it, he avails himself of your sanction; if you do not, he enters into an argument with you. I remember reading of an elderly gentleman, who sent for two of his friends, and consulted them on the propriety of his marrying his housekeeper. He enumerated all her good qualities, and all the advantages that would accrue to himself, from such a step. The friends were not convinced, and remonstrated against it. The gentleman urged his former argu-

ments, with greater force. One of the friends was beginning to answer them, with some warmth; when the other, more sagacious, stopped him. "Before you proceed any further," said he, "give me leave to ask our friend one question—Are you not already married?" The gentleman owned he was. "Well, then," said the friend, "nothing remains but to wish you joy, and to beg we may have the honour of saluting your lady." The lady was accordingly introduced, and placed at the head of the table; and the visit passed off to the satisfaction of all parties. As the two friends were returning home together, the gentleman who had been prepared to argue thanked the other for his timely interference: For said he, "if you had not prevented me, I should have said some things for which our friend would never have forgiven me.

But how came it to enter into your head," continued he, "that he was married?" "I don't know," replied the other. I fancied he had done a foolish thing, and had a mind to shelter himself under our advice."

"I am glad, however," said I, "that I have disburthened my mind freely to my mother. Though no good can result from it, with regard to her, much will to myself. I feel more at ease than I have ever done since I suspected her design.

Ever your's,

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

LETTER XVII.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Ravenhill Lodge, May 16, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

MR. WINTERDALE left us last Monday, and has not been at the Lodge since ; so it seems the projected match is not yet to be brought under the discussion of the public. Mr. Henry says his father is going to London upon business, as soon as he dare trust his leg. Perhaps that business may be to make enquiries concerning Lady Montgomery, and the intelligence may be such as will keep her ladyship a widow. It can hardly be imagined that the careful, prying, penetrating Mr. Winterdale should take her upon her own word. He must be far gone, indeed, if he does.

Mr. Henry visits us as usual. I said to him, this morning, "You find you were mistaken in supposing that Mr. Winterdale would not forsake the Lodge, when he was once able to get away from it. He is not half so civil as Noah's dove: she came back twice to her benefactor, before she quitted him for ever; he does not even return once."

"It was necessity, not gratitude, that brought her back" said Eleanor. "You know the waters still covered the earth, and she found no rest for the sole of her foot."

"Then there are hopes of Mr. Winterdale," said I. "Necessity may yet be our friend."

"It is the most extraordinary circumstance I ever met with," said Henry. "I could not have believed it was in human nature to receive the benefits my

father has from Mrs. Mereval, and, as soon as he had escaped from her house, to shew no remembrance of them !”

“ There is a great deal more in human nature than you know of,” said I.

“ There is much I never wish to know,” replied he. “ I wish I had never known such a flagrant instance of ingratitude in my father.”

“ You never saw Mr. Winterdale and my mother together, as we have,” said I. “ She thought it proper to give the father and son an opportunity of unreserved conversation, and therefore generally withdrew when you came ; but Eleanor and I have lately passed our evenings with them ; and, I assure you, we observed a complacency in his behaviour towards my mother, that we did not expect.”

“ What can have become of it then,” said he ?

“ I do not know,” replied I ; “ but I suspect it is bottled up ; and bye and bye the cork will fly, and it will all come out, with a bounce.”

Henry could not help laughing ; though he looked very anxious. “ What do you mean,” cried he ?

“ I intend to practise a very wise look, if my face is capable of it, before I tell you,” answered I.

He looked, with eager eyes, on Eleanor.

“ Charlotte has a mind to amuse herself with your impatience,” said she ; “ but we really imagine there is a little love between Mr. Winterdale and Mrs. Mereval.”

The lightning flashed from his eye in a moment. But, checking himself, he said, “ May I credit you, Miss Mowbray ? ”

“ How monstrous,” exclaimed I ! “ Does any body doubt Miss Mowbray ? ”

If I had asserted it, indeed, you might have looked incredulous."

"Pardon me," he cried. "I was afraid to give way to the pleasure I felt—but I cannot doubt it. The conduct of my father can only be accounted for by love or hatred. Gratitude would have pursued a middle course; and hatred is as impossible as that it should be the nature of the sun to freeze."

"If a certain event should take place," said I, "how happy we shall all be, as brother and sisters! We shall enliven that old hall of yours; and take the damask curtains out of the hands of the spiders."

"I am still afraid to hope," said he, "that Miss Mowbray and you would honour the old hall so far as to make it your home."

"What is my mother's castle is mine," said I, "till some adventurous knight

shall be bold enough to take me from it. There sits Eleanor : let her answer for herself."

" And I," said Eleanor, " will never leave my cousin for a less cause ; nor even for that if I can help it. It should require two knights to separate us.

" How lovely is friendship in two beautiful young females," exclaimed Henry ! " 'The man that would divide you, does not deserve either. But how shall I express my emotions of joy and wonder at what you tell me ? a circumstance so much beyond my hopes, that it never entered my mind."

" Why, you are as much transported as if you were going to marry my mother yourself," said I.

" A great deal more," replied he ; " for am I not to live with you and Miss

Mowbray morning, noon, and evening?
is not my home to be your home?"

"Softly," said I; "that is by no means certain. A moment ago you would not believe a fact; and now you are carrying it to all its possible consequences. You do not consider that your father may repent, before it is too late."

"Neither then, or ever, I hope," said Henry.

I sighed.

"There are some young men," said Eleanor, "who would not hail the idea of a mother-in-law with so much pleasure."

"Perhaps I might be one of the number, if I were differently situated," replied he. "You perceive I have associated other ideas with it; and that of enjoying your company and Miss Mereval's, is among the first. But I hope

to see the good effects of such a union on my father. I hope to see his unsocial habits yielding to the sweets of love and friendship; and his parsimonious ones to the dictates of Mrs. Mereval's propriety and generosity."

"Ah!" said I, "be not too sanguine: the age of miracles is past."

"What cannot love accomplish," said Henry? "his miracles can never be past. Did he not transform an unfeeling clod into an ardent lover.?"

"Cymon was not almost fifty," replied I; "nor had he lived twenty years by himself."

"But is not love daily assimilating the most distant characters," asked Henry.

"I believe," said Eleanor, "a similarity of disposition is not necessary to create love: this instance will prove it, as well as a thousand others: but, I think,

when married people have lived together some time, they gradually approach nearer the character of each other ; by a wish to please ; by mutual sacrifices of their own inclinations ; by imitation, which has some influence, though, perhaps, unknown to themselves ; and, last of all, by habit."

" If you are right," said Henry, " as I believe you are, how careful ought people to be in marriage ; since, if they chuse ill, the good will become bad, and the bad worse."

" But, on the other hand," said I, " the bad will be mended, and the human race not worse, upon the whole ; which seems to me a fairer way than that a few families should hoard up all excellence within themselves, and leave the rest of mankind in a state of hopeless reprobation."

“Then,” said Henry, “we will leave the good and bad to mingle as they may, and make as tolerable a production as they can: and, further, we will match opposite vices, to create virtues. Thus rashness and cowardice may produce patience; carelessness and envy, emulation; and avarice and profusion, generosity.”

You see, my dear Harriet, that Mr. Winterdale has made a better choice than I expected. I hope my mother’s disposition and his will have a salutary effect upon each other. As for any little brother and sister Generosities, I should think Mr. Henry would excuse their appearance.

I need not tell you that we cautioned Henry with regard to secrecy; or that he was aware of its necessity, as well as ourselves. If the event

never happen, it is better not to have been suspected; if it do, let those concerned divulge it in their own way.

Henry Winderdale's solitudes and attentions might be construed into love, if they were directed to one of us; but he poises them so exactly, that neither of us can say she has a greater share than the other. As he has promised not to divide, so he has resolved not to distinguish, Eleanor Mowbray from

Your

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

LETTER XVIII.

TO HENRY WINTERDALE, ESQ.

London, May 21, 1812.

DEAR HENRY,

I ARRIVED safe in town last night, without any inconvenience to my leg ; and as I mean to make a short stay, I have instantly set about the business that brought me hither. I have called upon my agent, and desired him to prepare his accounts for my inspection, without delay. But I have a business of far more importance in hand, which I have not yet informed you of.

You know what a solitary life I have led for many years past. In fact, I begin to be tired and ashamed of it. I might, however, have continued it still,

if accident had not brought me acquainted with the lady at the Lodge. I found her, at first, so humane, and so careful of me, than I must have been worse than a brute, not to have been thankful; and, upon further knowledge of her, I discovered that she was prudent, frugal, and of few words; and that she had retired into the country merely to avoid company. All these things so gained upon me, that I did not like the thoughts of returning home, and giving up such a treasure.

While I was ruminating upon this subject, and wishing to know some particulars of her family and fortune, her maid brought her a letter, in my presence, which she opened, and I was sufficiently near to see that it contained a bank note of five hundred pounds.— Perceiving my curiosity was excited, she put the open letter into my hands,

saying, that though she had shunned the society of a numerous acquaintance in London, many of whom were attracted by her daughter ; yet she would explain her situation to me, whom she regarded as a particular friend. She then proceeded to tell me that her real name was Montgomery ; that she was the widow of Sir George Montgomery ; that her jointure was a thousand pounds per annum ; and that the letter in my hands was from a Mr. Mountney, an eminent solicitor in London (whom I knew by name) enclosing the last half year's income. " You will observe," continued she, " that the letter is addressed to Mrs. Mereval ; but, within it, my title is mentioned, though not my name. My own inclination would have led me to avoid the company I have been too much drawn into ; but I have an additional motive. A distant

relation claims the estate of the late Sir George ; the affair is now in Chancery ; and though there is no doubt that my daughter's right will be established, I should not choose to appear in the world, while it is disputed. We have taken the name of Mereval, for the present, that we may not be followed and interrupted by such of our acquaintance as might be disposed to break in upon our retirement."

I thanked Lady Montgomery for her confidence, and it determined me immediately, as to the course I should take. I told her that her society was become so agreeable to me, that I dreaded to lose it, as the time approached when I must quit her house ; and, that if she thought favourably enough of me to accept my offer, I would make her an additional jointure of five hundred pounds per annum, and

undertake the management of the chancery suit. She received my proposal like a woman who was not in haste to refuse it; and, soon after, I obtained her consent.

You know I am under no obligation to justify my conduct to you, who are my son; or even to give any reason for it; but I will take upon me to say, that independent of the person of Lady Montgomery, and my regard for her, this is one of the best bargains I ever made in my life. She requires no carriage, not even another servant in the house, except those she will bring with her from the Lodge, which are indispensable. She will add a thousand pounds a year to my income; and, upon the exactest calculation I can make, she and her three women servants will not cost me three hundred pounds. There is seven hundred

pounds annual gain. Her daughter will pay me two hundred pounds a year for her board, and will not even have a maid to wait upon her. She cannot eat and drink more than thirty shillings a week, which will amount to seventy-eight pounds a year; say eighty, for the sake of even numbers. That increases the profit to eight hundred and twenty pounds. Miss Mowbray will also pay two hundred pounds, which, at the same rate, makes nine hundred and forty. She will pay a hundred pounds for her two servants; and I would willingly take sixty pounds out of this, to make up my thousand; which I ought to do, as they will chiefly consume what is left at our own table; but servants are such a set of confounded wasters, that I dare not. I shall not lose by them, howe-

ver; and we can make Miss Mowbray's man assist Mendall.

Thus, you will see, at a fair calculation, I cannot gain less than nine hundred pounds per annum by my marriage with Lady Montgomery; and prudence would have decided for it, had inclination been out of the question. Of the truth of her statement, the letter I saw, was a sufficient voucher; but that I might have nothing to reproach myself with, I, this morning called upon Mr. Mountney, who confirmed every syllable of it; her jointure, her retiring from the world, her assuming the name of Mereval, and the chancery suit.

Charity would have been another motive for my marrying Lady Montgomery, if I had wanted one. What a pity would it be for a couple of poor defenceless women to be plagued with

a suit in chancery, while I had nothing to do but manage a few actions at common law. I shall take great pleasure in conducting it, and I am sure we shall win.

I have another project in my head, which you cannot fail to approve.

The Montgomery estate is upwards of £8,000 per annum, and I believe it is capable of being raised to £10,000. When the law-suit is determined in her favour, you shall marry Miss Montgomery. And now, you cannot but say that, with such a wife, and such a fortune, I have amply provided for you. In the mean time, you will have every opportunity to take care that another does not snap her up. It is true the girl is a little pert; but with her person, family and fortune, something must be excused.

I had some thoughts of proposing an excursion into Wales to Lady Montgomery and her family, marrying her when there, and taking her straight to Winterdale Hall, on our return; but I have changed my mind, to spite the parson. I will make him publish the banns in the church, three times, for a shilling; and then marry us for the least sum allowed by law. What that is, I know not. I mean to enquire of my attorney; but I believe it is tenpence. You will, therefore, send him a shilling, as soon as you receive this, and a written order to publish the banns of marriage between John Winterdale and Mary Montgomery, both of this parish; and you will desire it to be done the three first days that there is service in the church. Do not fail; and whatever questions may be asked you, answer none.

You will likewise give Martha the keys of all the rooms, and tell her to air them, and put every thing in order. The labourer's wife may help her. And let the ham that is not so good as it should be, be eaten.

I hope you are satisfied with the sixty pounds a year that I have consented to allow you. I am sure it is more than I could spend, if I had meat, drink, washing and lodging provided for me, as you have. I thought fifty more than sufficient; but I had a mind to be munificent, so threw in the other ten.

I have made Mendall acquainted with my matrimonial scheme. He approves it very much. I shall new dress both myself and him, in London. Deliver the letter inclosed with this,

as directed ; and write a line, to tell me you have obeyed the orders of

Your affectionate Father,

JOHN WINTERDALE.

LETTER XIX.

TO JOHN WINTERDALE, ESQ. LONDON.

Winterdale, May 23, 1812.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE obeyed your commands, with the strictest punctuality ; though I own I was sorry to be the instrument of such a marked affront to Mr. Thacker.

It is with the sincerest pleasure that I congratulate you on your approaching marriage, and on the choice you have made. The ladies at the Lodge have always appeared to me, not only among the most beautiful, but among the most accomplished and most deserving of their sex ; and I should have blessed the day that brought us acquainted with them, if it had not been distin-

guished by such a serious accident to yourself. I look forward with great satisfaction to the pleasure of such society, in our present, and long past, lonely mansion.

I have delivered your letter to—— whom shall I say? to Mrs. Mereval, as it was directed; and have introduced myself to the young ladies, as their future brother. I know not how to pronounce or write the name of Montgomery; as I have, myself, such an inviolable regard for truth, that I would have trusted to my own energy to repel intruders, rather than have shrunk from them, under a borrowed name.

I have ventured to employ a few labourers in the gardens and park, and to send for some different workmen from the town, to put the house in order; believing that on such an oc-

casion, you would not choose to have any thing wear the appearance of neglect.

With regard to the allowance you thought proper to offer me when I left college, it is certainly inadequate to the wants of a man in my station ; but if such be your pleasure, I shall bring my wants down to it ; for I cannot beg, even of my father.

I am, dear Sir,

Your ever dutiful and affectionate Son,

HENRY WINTERDALE.

LETTER XX.

TO MR. WILLIAM MENDALL.

Winterdale, May 23, 1812.

DEAR MUSTER MENDALL,

AS Muster Henry is so kind as to offer to send this pissel for me, I must rite a line to tel you the news; tho every thing is at sixes and sevens, and I dont kno wich to begin furst; for I am in sich a quandary, I cant tel how to turn miself. The long and the short is, my masters going to be marrid. He is to be axtin church tomorro, wich, to be shure, is the most strangest thing that ever anny gentelman thot on. For sich as wee to be axt in church is all very natteral, and I shold have no objecshons to it miself; but for a grand

gentleman like him, its quite monstruss, and wot is as odd, to the full, noboddy does not kno who the lady is. Wen Rafe tooke the banes to Mr. Thaccer this morning, they had him into the parler, and axt him if he knod wot hid brot. And Rafe sed, No; but I was to ge a shillin with it, and there it is. And they sed, says they, why its banes a marrige between your master and won Mary Mungummery; who is she? Says Rafe, says he, thats moor nor I can tell; for I never hard the name befoor, in all my born days. Why, says Mr. Thacker, says he, her, is a this parish? Why then, says Rafe, as yo be the parson a the parish, yo be moor liklier to kno, nor I be; howsomever, I cont tell, and if I cold, I has no horders to tell.

Now yo knos I have lived with the Squire, sixteen yeres, come Martle-

tlemas, and in all that time, I never seed him speke to no woman but myself. You and me has oftens said he mite take a fansy to Maddam Mereveal, seeing how kindly she behafed to him, wen he brok his leg ; but you knos thare has never bin the day, never since he left, that ever he has bin to the Loge ; and moor nor that, her name is not Mungummury ; so it cant be she. Now, I have bin a thinking, and thinking, and I cant think of noboddy but the young woman that cum sum time ago to borde at Tummas Jennins. Shes a pritty sort of a minnikin miss ; and we none on us kno who she is, or were she comes from ; and I am sure her name is Mary : and I alis thot she was no better nor she shuld be by her waring her wite gownds ; so praps master as bin thick with her, and wunt let his child go to the parish.

But dont menchon no sich a thing, I beg on you ; for I wold not have it come to his ears for no munney ; and I have not tould it to no Chrishtan sole, but Rafe and Betty Tayler, that is come help me to clene the house. But one thing I can tel my master, and that is that I have not bin mistris at the hall so long to be under his lye by at last. No, Ile get every thing in order, and set every thing off to the best advantidge, and noboddy shall have to say miss I do, and Ile cuke the wedding dinner, and Ime a thinking wot it shal be, and how it shall be sot upon the tabel ; and then Ile liver up the keys, and leaf my master, and never darken his doors agen ; and if I can see ever a sober, stiddy, tidy young man, that has saved some monny, and wants a industruss wife, praps I may marry ; and if I

dont Ile keep a scule, and larn children to rede and spel, and nit and so. 'Thank God I has not lived so long in my plase, but Ive saved a little munny miself, and I knos I am a pretty good scollard.

Muster Henry is a dear, swete, young gentleman. It will go to my hart to leve you and him; and I likes poore Ralfe verry wel, and so I does Carlo; and my master, himself, is not much amis, wen you are at home, to luck ater us, astead of he. I am shure I shal cry to leav you all: but wot con a boddy do? for I never wil stay to be nocked and pooled about by sich a mistris as her, thats curtain.

I did not think I cold have stayed to rite sich a long lettar; for wot with sweeping, and doosteng, and skowering, and thinking, I am at my wits end. I runs up stares twenty times in

an hour, and afore I gets to the top, I
forgets wot for. So no more at pre-
sent from your wel whisher and feller
sarvent,

MARTHA STABLE.

LETTER XXI.

TO MR. WYLLIAM MENDALE.

Winterdeal, May 23, 1812.

HONORIT CUR,

HOPPING these wul find yo in gud yelth, as threw marsy I be at this time, I be gooin to tel yo the neues ; tho I do suppose as it goos with Misis Mathers, hur wul save me the troubbel ; let a human alone for that. If yo dos not no, yo wul not gess o sevin yere. Mastr be gooin to be morrid. I tuk the banes a mattremony, mi own self, this mornin to the parsun, for im to be acksd a the chorch with Mary Mundgumbrey ; and us conna find out, for the blood on us, whoever hur may be. Misis Mathur thinks as how it be the pratty young homan as be at Jennins,

becos her be a tite wench, and nobody do no hur : for my part, I did think it must be Madam Merriwool, seein as how he binna akwinted with no othur o hoomankind, and I thot as hur mut change hur name o purpuss to hav im ; but I went to the blacksmiths just now, to get a hoss shod, and the willrit says as how a hooman conna chang hur name till her be afore the pareson ; and so it conna be she. Dik Morris said it must be som Lunnon lady, an mastr wos gon to fatch hur ; but the wilrit sad, yo grate fewl, how can that be ? this binna itha porish o Lunnon, be it ; and the parsun tould Rafe, here, both o this porrish, didnt he, Rafe ? That he did, says I, an it must be a nashon lung porrish, to rech from here to Lunnon ; and then I up and told um wot Mather did say about the wench at Jennens ;

but, arter all our argleing, we wun fain to leav it as us fun it.

Now I be a thinkin that, as Master allis insenses you of every thing, I shud lik to here yor vardit, an if yo wood but rite a few lines, just to let a boddy a letel into the lite o things, I shud tack it very kindly on you; becase wy, as the parsun imself donna no nothin about it, I shud be the wisist mon a the porrich; and I wul gee yo my word noboddy shuld na no it.

For my part I mus nids say I be glad as mastr begooiin to be morrid; for us mun ha sum maids about the house; and I hops they moy be pratty, an we shal leed a more merryer lif an have better dooins. Pure Mathar kiks and winces, an conna abare the boshon of having a mises, an moor speshally the wench at Jennins; an hur do soy hur

wull hop the twig. But I do no wat be wat; an uf I cood stoy e my plase as it has bin, I unna leaf it wen it be better: and dear Mister Mendale I hops yo wul considder on it, an not tak bug, an purtend to think a leevin on us: for I do not no wot upon Gods yarth us shud do without yo; for yo be lik, as a boddy ma soy, to a good stout pal-ing, as kips the hoolf from the ship, wich be all at prison from

Yore's to commend,

RALPH RUSSETTING.

LETTER XXII.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Ravenhill Lodge, May 23, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

MR. HENRY WINTERDALE called upon us this afternoon, and delivered a letter to my mother. She retired to her dressing-room to read it, and he shook hands with us both—Give me joy, said he: we are brother and sisters. I have received a letter from my father, in which he formally announces his intention of marrying—whom shall I say? for I know.

I coloured scarlet deep. “Say the truth,” replied I—I like either that or nothing.”

“So do I,” rejoined Henry. “But

I must only speak it to you, at present ; for my father has taken the extraordinary resolution of having the banns of marriage published in the church, instead of being married with a license, and he has cautioned me not to give any information on the subject. I sent the banns, this morning, to Mr. Thacker, and no two people in the village are together at this moment but are endeavouring to find out the lady."

" I wish she may be found out," said I.

" Why so," demanded he ? " If her ladyship and my father choose to keep the secret till they go to to church, it concerns only themselves. Were I in her place, as she is known here only by the name of Mereval, I would not be called Montgomery ; but would sink both names together in that of Winterdale."

“ It would save part of the shame of acknowledging deceit,” said I.

“ Surely you give it too harsh a name,” said Henry. “ If Lady Montgomery lays aside her rank, and lives in an obscure country village, she imposes upon nobody ; she passes, not for greater, but for less than she really is. How many kings and great personages have travelled incognito without ever having been accused of deceit ! I hope, Miss Mowbray,” continued he, addressing himself to my cousin, “ that you are not one of them, and that I may not hereafter discover you are of too high a rank for me to claim you as my sister.”

“ No,” said Eleanor, “ I am the daughter of a worthy clergyman, and the sister of Sir George Montgomery. I have been brought up in a village as retired as this. I have visited only the

neighbouring families, and I have seen no amusements but a concert, a ball, or a play, at the next country town. I had, therefore, no acquaintance to shun. On the contrary, I wished to see the great world; and, as I am now my own mistress, I requested Lady Montgomery to permit me to board with her. It happened she was then withdrawing from it; and my inclination to enter into the gay scenes of London gave place to my desire to live with my cousin, between whom and myself there has been a great affection from our infancy. It is not one of the least agreeable ideas that present themselves to my mind, on the approaching marriage of Lady Montgomery, that I shall still be allowed to make one of her family—nor am I," added she, in a lower voice, insensible to the pleasure of your making a part of it."

Henry almost forgot his system of equality. He seemed to devour every word that Eleanor uttered, and when she had ended, his answer came unfinished from his tongue; so inarticulate that we knew not what it was. I relieved him from his embarrassment by saying, "Of one thing be assured, Henry, that whatever dissimulation you may discover in the Montgomeries, there is none to be found in Miss Mowbray. She has never been other than she seems, artless truth and candour personified."

Henry had now sufficiently recovered himself to hold the balance even. He said it was impossible for either of us to lessen the great regard he felt for us; or the pleasure he should derive from our being inmates of the same house.

“I wonder whether your great gates will open to receive us,” said I.

“I hope not,” said Eleanor. “Mr. Winterdale’s habits are so confirmed, that, if I were Lady Montgomery, I should be very careful to make no innovations, but such as were indispensable.”

“It is very extraordinary,” said I, “that none of us have ever caught a glimpse of the mansion. It seems to me to be surrounded by a spell, like the palace of the sleeping beauty; and I should not be surprized if, when the fence has opened to admit the future lady of the castle, it should close again, to exclude her followers.”

“If that should prove the case,” said Eleanor, “we will get some old duenna to look after us, and we will remain at the lodge.”

“The revolution that will be effected

in our small family, by the introduction of females, is so uncertain that I can neither comprehend or anticipate it," said Henry, "I can form no idea of the consequences it will produce ; and it seems so remote from every thing I know to be fact, that I have some difficulty in believing it."

"I expect," said I, "that the very doors will start off their hinges, with surprize, at our entrance, and that the ladies in your family pictures, if you have any, will jump down from their frames, to hail the appearance of some of their sex."

"I can truly affirm," said Henry, "that I never saw a woman enter the doors, but our female servant ; and two others, who preceded her, when I was a boy ; and I believe that no other woman ever has entered them, since the death of my respected mother."

“I wonder,” said I, “that you are not petrified, and your father *brutified* by such a way of life! I declare I am afraid to come among you! I have only yet seen you abroad, in the society of Christians: what you may be in your own den I dread to think of!”

“Not so savage as you seem to fear,” replied Henry. “We preserve something of the manners of men, as well as the forms. That my father’s wife will make a reform in the interior of the house, I believe, and hope; but I think the observation dictated by Miss Mowbray’s good sense, respecting caution, would be well worth attending to. I cannot tell, or even guess, where my father will be conformable, or where inflexible: I only know he is not accustomed to contradiction.”

“Miss Mowbray was certainly very right,” said I. “You know she and I

shall be only two pretty little cyphers in the family ; but were I in my mother's place, I would no more touch one of the smallest habits of such a man, than I would run my fingers into one of the prickly, poisonous hedges of India. I should think it a deadly sin to alter the form of his night cap."

"Do you think," said Eleanor, "that we may be permitted to bring our piano forte with us?"

"Do I think I live," exclaimed Henry. "Is it possible to doubt, that you are to employ and amuse yourselves as you please! I have already found out a domicile for you," added he, "which I hope will not be unpleasant. The front of Winterdale Hall is the only part that is not enclosed by fine venerable wood. In the centre of this, on the first floor, is the drawing-room ; and, on one side, is a large room, com-

municating with two smaller. These I have destined for my sisters. The view from all the windows is charming, extending over the distant country to the Welsh hills. The furniture is rich, old, and massive, and has never been made use of in my memory. I have given orders for its removal ; imagining you would prefer your own, as being more modern and convenient. One of these apartments will make a drawing-room you can call your own. I have not been altogether free from a selfish motive in my arrangement ; for I hope that, into this, you will sometimes do me the favour to admit me ; and if you give your piano forte a place in it, it will afford me a gratification as exquisite as it will be new. Nothing could give me more pleasure," continued he, " than to adorn these apartments with all that I could conceive would be use-

ful or agreeable to you ; but — you know I have not the power.”

We thanked this excellent young man, almost with tears of gratitude ; and assured him we were provided with every thing of the kind he alluded to. Tea was then brought in ; my mother joined us ; and not the least notice was taken of the intended union of the two families.

So far, my dear Harriet, my mother goes on triumphantly. But Mr. Winterdale is in London : in the place, where, if he fall into any company, he may hear a reason given for the sudden disappearance of Lady Montgomery, that he has not dared to think of ; where, if he have dealings with any fashionable tradesman, he may be told, on mentioning her name, that she is in his debt. Her security rests upon his way of life. Though London is familiar to him, it is

the streets, not the inhabitants ; and if he have purchases to make, he will probably go to a cheaper market than she did. He lodges in some street near the Strand.

Ever your's,

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

LETTER XXIII.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Ravenhill Lodge, May 30, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

WE have had a most serious alarm this morning. We were all three sitting together after breakfast, when Robert entered the room, and told my mother that a person below wanted to speak to her upon business, and refused to send up his name.

“Who can want to speak to me,” exclaimed my mother, with surprise, and some confusion! “What is he? What does he look like?”

“He is ill-looking enough, Madam,” answered Robert, “and rather shabby than otherwise; but he has boots on, and a stick in his hand.”

“Tell him,” said my mother, “I never admit any body I do not know.”

The servant left the room, to deliver the message. He returned in a few minutes, and told my mother that the man said it did not signify telling his name, for the lady did not know him; but that he was sent by a person whom she knew very well, and that he could deliver his errand to nobody but herself.

“My God,” cried my mother! “what shall I do! The oddity of this fellow has fluttered me so that I cannot see him. Charlotte,” continued she, “do you attend me; and Eleanor, my dear, do speak to him for me, and tell him I am not well. Bid the man come up,” said she to Robert, “and do you wait in the hall.”

We both understood her, in a moment, and Eleanor said, “I am afraid I shall make a bad substitute. An un-

truth I cannot tell; and I shall give evasive answers with a very ill grace."

"My dear Eleanor," said my mother, "do what you can to serve me, in your own way. I do not desire you to act contrary to your principles."

We then left the room.

What were now my feelings? Did I wish, as I had told Henry, that Lady Montgomery might be found out? I am afraid not. If truth must prevail, I own I wished it might be in another manner, and at another time. Do not, from this, impeach my former veracity. What I said to Henry was from the impulse of the moment, and was, perhaps more than duty to my mother would have permitted me to say.

We were not long in suspense. In about ten minutes Eleanor rang the bell, and Robert ushered the mysterious stranger down stairs. Would you believe

it, my dear Harriet?—the man was a beggar! one of those common, tramp-ing beggars, that never shew themselves twice in a place!

Robinson tells us, that she has several times seen families thrown into confusion by this sort of gentry. Their method is this. When they arrive at a village, they go to the public house: there they sit, and by dint of enquiries, and pretended knowledge of persons, they find out the name and connections of every family in the neighbourhood. They then enter the houses successively, and pretend urgent business with the master or mistress. They will take no repulse from servants; and when they are admitted, they introduce themselves by recommendations from such as they suppose the friends of the person they are speaking to.

Robinson, says she once lived with

a lady who had several times ordered these *soi-disant* men of business to be shewn into the dining parlour, on the ground floor, and had gone down stairs, herself, to meet them. One had been desired to wait upon her by a lady whom she knew very well by name, and whom it was very probable she might have been acquainted with ; but it so happened, that she had never spoken to her in her life. Here Mr. Intelligencer had palpably got upon a wrong scent. Another brought her a message from a friend at Bath ; but he had unfortunately forgotten her name—hoping, no doubt, that the lady would furnish him with it ; but she happened, unluckily for him, to be certain, that she had no friend whatever at Bath.

But, to return to the gentleman who was going to be introduced to Eleanor.

A young man, of very unfavourable

appearance, dressed in a blue coat and pantaloons, and a white waistcoat, not very clean, entered the room; and, making his bow, said, "I presume you are not Mrs. Mereval, Ma'am?"

Eleanor said she was not; but that whatever he had to say to Mrs. Mereval, he might say to her.

He then came up close to her, and, with an air of secrecy, said, "I beg your pardon, Ma'am, for intruding. You have not the honour to know me."

"Indeed I have not," said Eleanor; "but though you are a stranger to me, I am ready to hear your business."

"I am very sorry to trouble Mrs. Mereval or you, Ma'am, upon such a business;" but it is not my own fault," said the man.

"Be so good as to let me know what it is," said Eleanor.

"I beg your pardon, Ma'am," re-

plied he: "I was desired to call upon Mrs. Mereval. It is necessity that obliges me to do it!"

"At whose desire do you come, and what do you want?" said poor Eleanor, trembling.

"I was desired to come by several ladies in the neighbourhood," said the man, "who all told me what a very kind and good lady Mrs. Mereval was, and that she would be sure to do something for me, if I could but see her. I am not used to be troublesome, Ma'am; but I am in very great distress; and if you would be kind enough to represent my case to Mrs. Mereval, or have the goodness to consider it yourself, Ma'am, I should think myself very much obliged to you, Ma'am."

Eleanor felt relieved in a moment; but, as her fears subsided, her indignation rose. "Is it possible" demanded

she, "that you can have the audacity to insist upon penetrating into people's apartments on such business as this! If you had sent up your request by the servant, you might have been relieved; but you may be assured, that neither Mrs. Mereval or myself have any thing to bestow on such daring intrusion; and you may be thankful that there are no gentlemen here at present, or perhaps you would not have got off so cheaply."

The man then began to be abusive, and told Eleanor that he was sure she was no lady; that she was only the lady's maid, dressed in her mistress's cast cloaths; and that the lady herself would have given him something. Eleanor made no answer; but, ringing the bell, desired Robert to shew the man down stairs, and see him out of the house immediately.

We returned from our hiding place,

and laughed at our fears, now they were over. But, as there are stocks in every parish in England, do not you think they would be proper resting places for such vagrants as this?

We have had another visit since I wrote last, which should have taken precedence of this, if I had given them in their proper order; but my mind was so engrossed by the man of business, that I could not help introducing him first.

On Sunday, straight from church, came Mr. and Mrs. Thacker, and Mr. Sharp, who is still at the parsonage. Scarcely were they seated, when Mrs. Thacker and Mr. Sharp began; the one to attack my mother, the other, Eleanor and me. "What an amazing thing," cried one! "Did you *iver* hear the like in all your life," cried the other! Could you have supposed it *pos-*

sable," said the first? "Could you *iver* have thought of any *sich* a thing," said the second?" as Mr. Winterdale's going to be married?" said the lady? "and *nubbody* can give the least guess in the world, who he is going to have," said the gentleman!" "and to have the banns published in the church," said the parson!

At length Mrs. Thacker gained the victory, and went on. "Can you tell us, my dear Mrs. *Merewle*, who the lady is? For my part, I think she's *very wenteresome*. I'm sure, if I was single, and had not a bit of *fortin*, I would not think of marrying such a *feller* as him. What signifies his *fam-maly* and his estate, and his hall, and his park! he'll never let a lady have a *morsel* of comfort, and nobody can *visit* her, and she can have no society. I'm sure I would as soon trust myself

alone with a bear as I would with him. He's the most shocking, abominable *creter* in the creation!"

"Nay, now, aunt, now," said Mr. Sharp, "you are too severe. You must allow Mr. Winterdale to be *hoo-man*. To be sure, I *niver* spoke to the gentleman in all my life; but I have met him, both *a* foot and *a* horseback, and I *niver* saw any *think* so very abominable about him: nay, I think he is rather a little *handsomish*. Indeed I shall be *necessiated* to take up the cudgels, in favour of us poor gentlemen, if you run against us so; for I'm sure you ladies can make your own sides good at any time. I'm certain there's women in the creation far *inferor* to Mr. Winterdale. He pays *ivery* one their own, and *niver* gets drunk.

"That's all the good you can say of

him," said Mrs. Thacker, in reply to this champion of his sex ; " but there's something more than that necessary to make a lady happy. If a gentleman did run a little into debt, as many *very* fine gentlemen do ; and if he was a little intoxicated now and then, as some fine gentlemen are ; I had rather have him, ten times over, if he would let me dress in the fashion, and go to public places, and keep what company I pleased, and spend what money I pleased, than I would have such a curmudgeon as Mr. Winterdale, who does nothing but scrape money together, and keep folks at a distance."

" But, my dear," said Mr. Thacker, " while you are talking in this manner, you forget that the purport of our visit was, to inquire whether Mrs. Mereval knew any thing of the intended bride."

“No, I don’t *forget*,” answered the lady; “I should have come to it bye and bye; but you gentlemen never like to hear any body speak but yourselves. Have not you been talking this *very* day, in your pulpit, and your desk, for an hour or two together, and nobody *never* said one word to interrupt you? and now, when we come to a little *private conversation*. I think you ought to leave it to me. And so, my dear Mrs. *Merivle*, do you know who this Mary Montgomery is?”

“I do,” replied my mother.

“Well!” said Mrs. Thacker, “we are the luckiest people in the world.”

“Well!” said Mr. Thacker, “you know it was I that advised you to ask Mrs. Mereval.”

“Well!” said Mr. Sharp, “it is the very *fortunatist* thing that *iver* I knew in all my life.”

“ Pray,” said Mrs. Thacker, “ who is she ?”

“ That is a question not so easily answered,” replied my mother; “ for, Mr. Henry Winterdale told us under the most positive injunctions of secrecy.”

“ Why, you cannot be so *ill-natered*, certainly,” said Mrs. Thacker, “ as not to tell *us* ; your *very* particular friends. You may depend upon it, it shall go no further.”

My mother was silent.

“ It would not be right to break your word,” said Mr. Thacker ; “ but you may just give us a hint ; or let us guess, and tell us when we are wrong.”

“ But, Mr. Thacker,” said my mother, “ the promise required of us was, to answer no questions ; for Mr. Winterdale foresaw, as well as yourself, that if we were to answer in the

negative to all false conjectures, our silence might, at last, divulge the truth."

"Then the young ladies know, as well as yourself," said Mr. Sharp?

"They do," replied my mother.

"Then, now, my dear, sweet, pretty Miss Mereval and Miss Mowbray," said he, "I know I shall get it out of you; for you cannot find in your hearts to be so cruel, as to have the cruelty to deny me. Now, do, pray, tell me who the lady is?"

"That will not do," said I; "you must try again."

"Why, what can I say more," demanded Mr. Sharp? "I'd marry you, if there was but one; but the Doctor here, won't let me have both of you; and you are such dear, lovely, bewitching *angils*, that I can't tell, for the

life and soul of me, which I should choose."

"You bid high, indeed, now," said I; "but still I keep my secret."

"And so do I," said Eleanor.

"Well, I must confess," said Mr. Sharp, "it is the very strangest and *wonderfullest* thing that *iver* I knew in all my life."

"Very extraordinary, indeed," said Mr. Thacker! "three women intrusted with a secret, and not one tell it!"

"You are always so *severe* upon *we* ladies," said his wife. "The most *extraordinary* thing would be to refuse Mr. Sharp; though, to be sure, the ladies don't think he's in earnest."

"Some people," said Mr. Thacker, returning to the charge, "say that Mr. Winterdale is going to marry a young person at farmer Jennings's; but I cannot believe it; for I cannot disco-

rer that he has ever been to Jennings's, except to speak to the farmer."

My mother was silent.

"What signifies mincing the matter," cried Mrs. Thacker. "I like to be upright and downright. People *do* say, Mrs. *Merenle*, that its you, and nobody else; and that, somehow or other, your name is Montgomery; for they say, you are the only person in this parish that Mr. Winterdale is acquainted with."

I durst not look at my mother. But she answered, with great composure, "I cannot help what people say; nor does it give me any disturbance. My acquaintance with Mr. Winterdale was neither of his seeking or mine."

"There," said Mr. Sharp; "you see she can't deny it, *howiver*. We've *catched* you, Ma'am. You can't say it is not you—can you?"

“You forget,” replied my mother, “that I have promised to say nothing about it.”

“Well,” said Mrs. Thacker, “if you can stand that, you can stand any thing, and we must give it up, I believe. We shall all know bye and bye, and so we must have patience—But will you give me leave to ask you one question?”

“As many as you please,” replied my mother.

“Aye,” said Mr. Sharp, “you may easily give us leave to ask questions, when you are determined not to answer any in the world.”

“I shall be very happy to give Mrs. Thacker any information in my power,” said my mother, “if it is upon a subject on which I am permitted to speak.”

“Well, you *may* speak to this,” said

Mrs. Thacker. "Do you intend to *visit* the bride?"

"Indeed," replied my mother, "I have not yet given it a thought. I should suppose it will hardly be expected; for Mr. Winterdale has not even been at the Lodge, to thank me for my trouble during his confinement; but, as you are the vicar's lady, I should certainly visit her, if I were you."

"Me!" exclaimed Mrs. Thacker. "Why don't you know how shockingly he has treated Mr. Thacker! I think it would be *very* improper for me to notice his *wife*."

"I think so too," said the husband.

"Mr. Thacker," said the lady, "I wish you would mind your own preaching, and not *purtend* to meddle and make with the *visits* of *we* ladies. Its quite out of your *sphere*, I assure you.

Certainly Mrs. *Merevle* and *me* are sufficient judges of *them there subjicks*, and you need not take the trouble to give us your opinion."

"Since you refer it to me," said my mother, "let the gentlemen fight their own battles, and let their wives be at peace. It is probable the intended bride of Mr. Winterdale, whoever she be, has not offended you, and it would be cruel to revenge the wrongs Mr. Thacker has sustained, upon her. In a place where society is so scarce, you may each be glad of an agreeable neighbour; and if the gentlemen do not choose to join you, they may still keep at a distance."

Mrs. Thacker looked highly delighted, both with the advice and the compliment; and after telling my mother she would accompany her, if

she should visit the bride of Mr. Winterdale, the subject was dropped.

Thus ended one of the rudest attacks that can assail my mother, unless the discovery should actually be made.

And, after observing that it seemed rather to abate than confirm the suspicions of the Thacker family, thus ends the long letter of

Your

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

LETTER XXIV.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Ravenhill Lodge, June 6, 1812.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

I HAVE not often mentioned Montgomery to you, though there has not been a week in which we have not frequently seen him. If you were desirous to know the reason, I could give you more than one. First, then, though a constant attention to me has been evident in all his looks and actions, it was never confirmed by words; and secondly, whenever the idea of any attachment on his part came across my mind, I felt my own folly hanging about my neck like a mill stone. I will, now, however, give you the con-

versation that passed between us this morning.

Eleanor was in our dressing room, writing a letter, and I was sitting alone, at my needle-work, when Montgomery entered. He drew his chair close to mine, saying, with some trepidation, "What an uncommon thing is it to find you alone! Nobody admires Miss Mowbray more than I; but I have often wished her at ten miles distance. She is as inseparable from you as your shadow."

"In whose company," demanded I, "can I find more pleasure than in Miss Mowbray's?"

"Pardon me," replied he; "I own I was thinking of my own gratification; not your's. I have long wished for this opportunity, and now I am fortunate enough to meet with it, I know not how to avail myself of it."

He stopped. I was silent; but I felt an agitation which scarcely allowed me to breathe. After a moment's pause, he went on.

“To be admitted to the degree of intimacy with you, that I have been favoured with, and not to love you, is impossible—at least, I have long found it impossible for me. The whole happiness of my life depends upon you; and, yet, if I might be permitted to ask, with hopes of success, I should scarcely know what to solicit. My only wish, hitherto, has been to make myself agreeable to you; but I should certainly not stop here. My ambition would be to deserve your love, if such desert is in human nature; and my highest felicity would be to obtain it. But I have told you my situation: my father is involved in an uncertain and expensive law suit; and till that be

decided, and even unless it be decided in his favour, I have nothing to offer that I could wish you to accept. I can, therefore, at present, only ask for your pity."

I felt totally at a loss what reply to make; but ashamed of my silence, I foolishly muttered something, I know not what, about distress, if it were real, being entitled to pity.

"You could not refuse me your compassion on the score of reality," said Montgomery, "if you knew what I have felt, and what I feel at this moment."

"It would be affectation to doubt your being serious, said I, recovering myself. It would be putting you to the expence of protestations I should not deserve. I have always thought that when a man singled out a woman from the rest of her sex, as the compa-

nion of his future days, he paid her the highest compliment in the power of man to bestow; unless any motives of interest were his inducement. Such cannot be your's; for you know not who I am. I, therefore, think myself much obliged by your good opinion of me."

"Are cold, unfeeling thanks, all you have to bestow," demanded Montgomery, in a melancholy accent?

"My gratitude is neither cold nor unfeeling," replied I.

"Might I venture to hope you could, in time, be brought to feel a warmer sentiment, if I should be enabled to ask it? Might I hope to retain a place in your remembrance till that time arrive? Or—but that I dare not hope—could you condescend to share my fortune and expectations, such as they are?"

"Young as I am," replied I, "and gay as is my natural disposition, I have

seen the folly of a life of dissipation, and I have felt how unsatisfactory its best enjoyments are. I am convinced that happiness and peace are only to be found in the heart-felt pleasures of a domestic circle, and the occasional company of a few friends. I could contract my wishes within a very moderate compass."

"Give me hopes, then," cried Montgomery, "that you will be mine!"

"Mr. Montgomery," said I, "you have acted with a degree of sincerity that called for more openness on my part; but I am so circumstanced that I have not dared to imitate you. My nature abhors duplicity, and even concealment; but I have a confession to make by which I run the risque of annihilating all your sentiments in my favour."

I trembled. Montgomery rose from his seat, and stood aghast.

“ I own,” said he, after some time, “ that I have wished to know some particulars concerning your family, and I hoped they might have followed the disclosure of my own: but what can I have to fear! To see you, to hear you, to know you, as I have done; who could doubt you? Your very thoughts are painted on your face, before they issue from your lips. If I did not now see your own emotion, I should conclude you were trifling with mine.— For God’s sake, put an end to my suspense, and if there is a dreadful story, let me hear it!

“ You shall,” said I. “ I did not mean to have made the discovery so soon; and I enjoin you to keep the secret, till you have my permission to reveal it. Promise me this.”

“ I do,” replied he; while he could hardly find breath for utterance. “ We

are here under a feigned name. Our real one is your own, Montgomery."

His face assumed the strongest expression of surprise and doubt, hope and fear.

"I am, indeed, your relation," said I; "the daughter of Sir George Montgomery."

He caught me in his arms, and, for some moments, we were both speechless.

Disengaging myself at length, I sunk down on my chair, and, pointing to that he had before quitted, I exclaimed, "Oh! if that were all!"

"What more can heaven bestow," cried Montgomery! "You would not have made this acknowledgment, if you had not thought me worthy of it! Tell me the rest another time; and let me feast upon this!"

I could not speak. The powers of life seemed suspended ; my eyes were fixed, without looking upon any object, and breathing did not seem necessary to my existence : though I was perfectly conscious of my situation. Montgomery was alarmed at my appearance.

“ Charlotte,” my dear Charlotte,” he cried, taking my hand, “ for heaven’s sake speak to me ! Say something, and do not make me tremble for your reason, if not your life.”

His words and endearments produced a happy effect. I burst into a violent flood of tears, and, by degrees, became calm.

“ What more you have to tell me,” said Montgomery, “ be it either now or another time ; as you like best ; but be assured I have no further interest in it than as it concerns yourself. If your being totally unknown was not an ob-

stacle to my endeavouring to make your mine ; no misfortune you may have sustained can have any weight. And, as to guilt, I should as soon suspect the purity of angels."

" I am not criminal," said I ; " but my folly, my imprudence have gone greater lengths than you can imagine. I must tell you now—if ever ; for I cannot go through this scene again."

" Now be it, then," said he, " to relieve your mind of the burden which oppresses it ; for, before heaven, I avow my firm belief that nothing you can possibly have done can lessen my ardent attachment, and my high opinion of you ; founded, as they are, upon such an intimate acquaintance. No, if there had been a particle of deceit in your composition, I must have seen, or suspected it. I must see it now ; instead of which your ingenuous mind is strug-

gling with the fear of disclosing something you conceive to be a fault."

"I have borrowed large sums of usurers," said I, with a firmness that was the result of all my faculties, collected, "to be repaid when I come of age."

Montgomery was thunderstruck.

"We have lived in a manner our present resources could not support; and I have anticipated those to come—those which, now, may never come."

"This, indeed, is what I could not have imagined," said he; "but it is incapable of shaking my love, or diminishing my esteem; for it is the fault of your mother; not your own. Is it possible that Lady Montgomery should have permitted her daughter, so young, and living under her maternal roof, to have recourse to such an expedient!"

“ I might endeavour to exculpate myself by laying the blame upon my mother,” replied I; and certainly she ought not to have permitted, much less have proposed, so shameful a proceeding; but I was old enough to have judged for myself, and can never be exonerated from the folly of having adopted it. You do not know—and may you never know, the consequences of spending more than you have to spend. At first it is mere thoughtlessness, and present gratification, which does not imply any thing wrong in the intention. By degrees, wants become pressing, creditors become clamorous; and means to appease them and extricate one’s self are employed, that one would have started from with horror, at the beginning. It is in this, as in all ill courses; the first step leads naturally

to others, and each succeeding one is more difficult to retrieve than the former."

"What, then," cried Montgomery, "must be the praise of a beautiful young woman, of nineteen, followed, as you must have been, by the adoration of our sex, and the envy of your own, to stop short in such a career."

"Not so great as you imagine," replied I. "That I felt uneasy under these circumstances is certain, and the reproaches of my own mind were neither few nor small; but how long we might have continued our way of life; or whether I might have been brought by apparent necessity to plunge deeper into the gulph of error; I know not.—The trial has happily been prevented. Your father's claim to my inheritance has been most salutary to me. It has opened my eyes at once, and my folly,

perhaps my guilt and ruin, have stared me full in the face ; as what had appeared to me only taking my own before it was due, might, in the end, prove robbery and injustice."

"To say you have not committed an error, my beloved Charlotte," said Montgomery, "would be to disavow both your feelings and my own ; your's, which suffer for it so severely ; and mine, which I confess are shocked at the recital. But small is the portion of it that falls to your share. What young girl could rise up, and counsel her mother to be more prudent ? What young woman could refuse to participate in the enjoyments which wealth affords to rank and loveliness ? The rest, as you justly observe, follows of course. Debts, when contracted, must be paid, and it would accord with your ideas of rectitude to discharge them with money that,

was undoubtedly your own, but which the law did not, at present, place under your controul. You are not to appreciate the step you took by the unforeseen event of a disputed patrimony."

"You are a better apologist for me," said I, "than I dare be for myself. I view my folly and its consequences together. But they have had this effect upon my mind, that, with the assistance of Almighty God, whose aid I have fervently implored, I never will again consent to a wrong action, knowing it to be so. I will rather embrace all the calamities that my own indiscretion, or the ill conduct of my fellow creatures may bring upon me."

"I could almost say," cried Montgomery, "it were better to err, and so repent, than never to have deviated from the right line. Sure I am that you are less likely to err than before ;

and that my admiration of you is redoubled by your sentiments and conduct on the disclosure of this oppressive secret."

"Your approbation is a balm to a wounded mind," said I: "I may now, in time, regain my own. But I will have no more confessions to make on my personal account. I will tell you the sums I stand engaged for, that I may not have a second shock to undergo myself, or to prepare for you. I first gave a bond for five thousand pounds, and afterwards for two; and the interest of both is accumulating."

"A few thousands more or less, my dear Charlotte," said Montgomery, "make little difference. Let us not think of it. Allow me to rejoice in the prospect before me, without reverting to the past. I will not have my

happiness interrupted by the consideration of a few thousand pounds."

I turned my eyes upon him, with a grateful smile, and he exclaimed, "That is worth them all"

Eleanor then entered the room; and, as she told me afterwards, she perfectly understood, by the countenance of both, that a declaration of love had been made on one side, and of misconduct on the other.

Congratulate me, my dearest Harriet, on my having made this discovery to the man whose esteem I dreaded to forfeit, and that it has, happily, not been productive of that effect. My former conduct is not the less reprehensible; nor my resolves, for the future, less strong; but my present feelings are not to be compared with those I have endured for some time past. I look Montgomery in the face, and say, I fear

you not; I have concealed nothing from you; you can now form a just estimate of me, and you regard me not the less. In a word, I seem to have found a protector, where I most feared to meet condemnation.

Surely nobody would be guilty twice that suffered like

Your

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

LETTER XXY.

TO MISS CASTLEMAIN.

Winterdale, June 13, 1812.

YOU will see, my dear Harriet, by the place from whence I date this, that we are become inhabitants of Winterdale Hall, and you will consequently suppose, that the happy knot is tied.

Mr. Winterdale returned from London early in last week; but took no notice of my mother; the necessary arrangements being made through his son. It was evident, however, that he had made no discovery to the prejudice of his intended bride. Public conjecture began to be weary as to the lady; and some people went so far as to imagine, that Mr. Winterdale had formed the scheme in derision of the vicar;

and had obliged him to publish fictitious banns, when no marriage was intended, that he might be laughed at for his pains.

The preparations at the hall; which consisted of little more than scrubbing and scouring, were thought only a pretence, to give it an air of probability.

This opinion, reaching the ears of Mr. Thacker, gave him some disturbance; and he sent his wife and Mr. Sharp to the Lodge (not daring to come himself), to see if any thing could be extracted from my mother, on the subject.

“Pray,” said Mrs. Thacker, as soon as she was seated, “have you heard the shocking report?”—So, thought I, all is out, then—“To be sure,” continued the lady, “there is nothing that people *vill* not say—though, for my part, I don’t believe a word of it.”

“But now, my dear Miss Mowbray,” said Mr. Sharp, “you *must* know; for I know you know *ivery think* in the world; and now I know you will have the goodness to be so good as to tell us.”

“It would take up too much time,” said Eleanor.

“O dear, no, not at all,” said Mr. Sharp: “I dearly love long stories.”

“I’m sure we shall listen to it with *very* great pleasure,” said Mrs. Thacker.

“What! to every thing in the world,” demanded Eleanor! “I should fatigue you with my unmeasurable wisdom.”

“Pooh, pooh, you know what I mean,” cried Mr. Sharp.

Pardon me,” said Eleanor; “I have not the least conception of it.”

“Why, then,” said Mrs. Thacker,

“there’s a report all about, that Mr. Winterdale does not intend to be married at all; and that he is only giving my gentleman the trouble to publish the banns on purpose to make a fool of him—Now what do you think of *that*?”

“I am sorry,” replied my mother, “that this is a subject on which I am not allowed to express what I think.”

“But you might say *whether* it is any body or nobody,” said Mrs. Thacker. “That would be telling no tales.”

“If it were a matter of opinion with me, as it is with you, I would tell you without disguise,” said my mother; “but you know it is a matter of fact, which I have promised not to disclose.”

“I can tell him one thing,” said Mr. Sharp; “he had better not come to go to

make a fool of *my* uncle: he may chance to repent, if he does. My uncle is the vicar of the parish; and, if I was him, I would complain to the bishop of the county."

"Mr. Winterdale cannot easily make a fool of Mr. Thacker," said my mother; "but he might expose himself to ridicule by attempting it."

"Why so I think," said Mrs. Thacker. "Every body knows Mr. Thacker's abilities in the pulpit; and he might have had a better living than this, if we could have found out where it was to be had. We did not want the means to come at it. And I *vonder* which *would* be the *worst*; for to write a lie, and give it the clergyman; or for the poor man to read it, when it was given him! For my part, I think there's no comparison in things."

"But," said my mother, "I under-

stand the hall is in a bustle; as if a new mistress were expected."

"Why there again," rejoined Mrs. Thacker; "that's a *very* unaccountable thing. To be sure, Mr. Winterdale has put himself to the expence of a few brushes and brooms, and has had Betty Taylor to clean—but where's any new servants? There is but one woman in the house; and she can't cook and wait upon a lady! Or, suppose the lady was to bring her own maid with her, its morally *impossable* for Martha to do all the rest? Or, suppose she brought the *reckisite* servants, where's the carriage? No lady can exist without a carriage! For my part, I should conceive it the horriddest thing upon earth, to be *obligated* to walk on foot—I don't mean *no* reflection upon you, my dear Mrs. Merevle, that just walk, now and then, to the *nicarage* or the church; but you

know, yourself, how shocking disagreeable that *po shay* was, when we went to the Assembly!

“It was, indeed,” said my mother, “and the post boy was still worse.”

“O, they’re a set of abominable wretches,” cried Mrs. Thacker!

“I’m sure I wonder how any body in their senses dare go to trust themselves with *sich* fellows. They are frequently *incapaciated* to keep their seat,” said Mr. Sharp.

“When it is considered,” said I, “that they have no other home than public houses, and no other business, when at home, than to drink, I should hardly expect to find them so sober and orderly as they, in general, are.”

“It’s *very* true, indeed,” said Mrs. Thacker; “but it’s *vell* for us that Mr. Thacker is not here; for he would call us to order; for you know he is *very*

mithodicle, with being so much used to the pulpit—And so, as I was saying, there's so little preparation at the hall, that perhaps it may be all a farce at last."

"Of all the men I ever saw," said I, "I think Mr. Winterdale has the least genius for farce."

"O, you don't know him," cried Mrs. Thacker. Spite would *sarve* him instead of *genus*. But, however, I think, myself, there's somewhat in it; for all you ladies own you are in the secret, and I cannot believe you would all stand by so quietly, and see Mr. Thacker bamboozled, and I think that is a trick Henry Winterdale would not have told you."

"You may be assured," said my mother, "we could not see any disrespect offered to Mr. Thacker without pain."

"Well, you are *very* good," said

Mrs. Thacker; " I could not, myself. To be sure I do snap him up a little sometimes, when he will have a finger in the pye; but, for all that, I should not like to see him made the laughing stock of nobody else."

Unexperienced as I am in these matrimonial matters, I think I could have told Mrs. Thacker, that one way to secure the respect of other persons for her husband would be to shew him respect herself. If she, who knew him best, affected to look down upon him, it would be natural enough for those less acquainted with him to follow her example.

A little more conversation of the same kind concluded the visit.

On our part no preparations were made, either for a wedding or a removal. Our family went on in the same track it had hitherto pursued.

Provisions were laid in for the ensuing week ; orders were given, to be executed at a future time ; and no servant, except Horton, who had been confidante from the beginning, had any reason to imagine we were interested in the proceedings at the hall.

On Monday morning a post chaise from the town, sent by Henry Winterdale himself, stopped at our door. My mother and I got into it, in our usual morning dresses, and drove to church ; and then, and not till then, had our own domestics any cause for suspicion that their lady was to be the bride.

Mr. Thacker had been roused from his bed only half an hour before, and told, that he must marry Mr. Winterdale.

We found the bridegroom, attended by his attorney, waiting for us in the

church porch, and the parson already in the church, which Mr. Winterdale would not enter, till necessity obliged him. Mr. Foreclose, the attorney, officiated as father; not as the friend of Mr. Winterdale, for he has not one in the world; but as his only acquaintance.

Mr. Thacker was extremely agitated by the presence of his enemy. He looked upon him with eyes in which fear and hatred were discoverable, and, at times, his voice faltered, so that his words were indistinct. Mr. Winterdale regarded him with a look of cool, steady defiance, and a kind of inward triumph. My mother was composed and collected.

My own feelings I cannot express. My view of Mr. Winterdale and Mr. Thacker, as they regarded each other, inspired me with horror—two fellow

creatures,—christians,—neighbours,—
I ought to add, gentlemen,—meeting
with the rancour of two rival bull
dogs; and, impelled by a sort of in-
stinctive hatred, ready to growl at, and
worry each other. For my mother,
my only sentiment at that moment,
was compassion. Culpable though she
be, and culpable in her motives for
this marriage; yet I could not help
trembling for her, when I saw her so-
lemnly resign herself into the clutches
of such a ferocious animal.

I looked at Mr. Winterdale, and at
his still beautiful bride, and asked my-
self, what is there in him that can in-
duce her to give up independence, even
accompanied, as it ought to be, by ob-
scurity; for ills she knows not of, and
may be doomed to suffer!—and for
ever! at least, so long as they both shall
live! There is something so awful

in the idea of this irrevocable sentence, that I should find all the love my heart is capable of, which I believe is not a little, necessary to support me under it.

By the bye it is fortunate for us creatures, who are generally destined to go through the world in pairs, that we are drawn towards each other by a stronger principle than reason. Cool, dispassionate reason would discover so many faults, and foresee so many evils, that we should hardly ever come together.

The ceremony ended, Mr. Winterdale put something into the hands of Mr. Thacker. What it was, I know not; but he boasts it was the precise sum exacted by law, and glories in the opportunity of affronting the parson.

My mother and I drove to the Hall; she exulting in the success of her

plans, I deploring their probable consequences to both parties. Mr. Winterdale and his companion walked back, as if nothing had happened, only as they were there to receive us, it is probable they walked a little faster. Henry paid his compliments of congratulation, and then set off for Eleanor. Breakfast was brought in, in a very creditable style, though no intimation had been given to the servants of the coming of their new lady; and Mrs. Martha contrived to send us in a dinner, which did honour to her skill as a purveyor and a cook.

Eleanor and I were never weary of admiring this fine old mansion, and the heavy gilt furniture, and magnificent looking glasses it contains. The most modern date their establishment in the house from the marriage of Mr. Winterdale's father; and the others

trace their origin to different generations of remote antiquity: but what charmed us most was our own apartments. The view from the windows is inconceivably fine; the bedchamber is spacious enough for a ball room, and the drawing and dressing rooms would each contain a moderate family. After the furniture had been removed by Henry's direction, the rooms appeared so forlorn, that when it had gone through the different processes of cleaning and airing, he ordered every thing to be replaced, leaving it to our choice to retain, or discard it, as we pleased.

Though there is nothing in which modern inventions have a more decided advantage over ancient usages than furniture, and the decoration of houses; yet we thought time had given these venerable inhabitants of Winterdale

Hall a kind of prescriptive right, we did not choose to invade. Every thing was whole and grand, though somewhat tarnished. We kept our drawing room, without making any other innovation, than banishing a huge marble table, to make way for our piano forte ; we added a few conveniences to our dressing room ; and we were content with the comfortable refuge our thick damask curtains afforded us, in our immense bedchamber.

My mother sent for poor Martha on the day of our arrival at the Hall. She appeared before her with fear and trembling. After giving due commendations to the dinner she had provided, my mother told her she should still keep her place as housekeeper ; but, as the family was now enlarged, it would be necessary to have assistance, and that her own cook and housemaid

were coming, who would be under her direction. The honest creature actually burst into tears, and quitted the room, praying God to bless her mistress.

Mendall is left behind in town, to transact some business which his master could not stay to finish.

On Tuesday, while the remnants of our possessions remained at the Lodge, under the protection of our man, Montgomery coming to pay his usual visit, was, by my mother's order, directed here. Eleanor and I were alone when he was announced. He entered the room with astonishment in his countenance, and seemed in doubt whether he should mention the cause of it.

"You may speak," said I. "Eleanor is *me*."

“I am told,” said he, that your mother is become the mistress of this house.”

“It is very true,” replied I, “Lady Montgomery is become Lady Winterdale.”

“Then the grand secret you did me the honour to confide to me, is known to all the world.”

“It is of course, known who we are,” answered I, “but the worst part of the secret is yet known only to yourself.”

“Pardon my rudeness,” cried he, “I am jealous of your confidence, as the only pledge I possess of your regard.”

“I should not have made a wanton, needless confession of my errors, a confession to me so painful, to a man for whom I felt no regard. I concealed nothing from you relating to my-

self; and I was not sorry, when the conflict was past, that your disinterested attachment led me to the avowal, before we acknowledged ourselves to the rest of the world; but I had no right to reveal the intentions and prospects of my mother."

"Dearest Charlotte," said Montgomery—"let me say, my dearest Charlotte—I despise myself for feeling a moment's dissatisfaction at your conduct. What I know is so admirable, that I ought to admire what I do not comprehend."

"One thing only remains for you to know," said I; "and, as it relates to my mother, it should not, according to my own maxim, be told by me; but, as it cannot now frustrate her schemes; and, as it must shortly be known to Mr. Winterdale; I had rather you were made acquainted with it by

myself, than by the uproar it must soon occasion. My mother is indebted to every tradesman employed about her house and person ; her real motive for retiring into this country, and assuming the name of Mereval, was to elude her creditors ; and she has married Mr. Winterdale, without informing him of these circumstances. Ask me not whether I excuse or condemn such proceedings. Different duties forbid me to do either. I can only say that the last I endeavoured by every argument in my power to prevent."

"O, Charlotte," said Montgomery, "no duty forbids me to blame Lady Winterdale ; and from my soul I do it. Inattention may form a plea for contracting her debts, and necessity may palliate her running from them ; but to throw them upon Mr. Winterdale, unknown to himself, is a delibe-

rate fraud. I now see in a stronger light than ever, the guidance and example by which you were led astray; and I see my charming cousin, shaking off the fetters of maternal authority, when used to an ill purpose; and contrary to the laws of nature and custom, becoming the monitress of her mother."

"The conduct of Lady Winterdale cannot appear to you in a more heinous light than it does to Charlotte," said Eleanor; "though duty to her mother checks her words. She is under no restraint when speaking of her own, which is far less deserving of reprehension."

As I found, if the conversation continued, I must either listen to my mother's condemnation or my own praise, I put an end to it, by introducing Eleanor to Montgomery, as another

cousin, in the same degree with myself; and while he was congratulating himself on his newly found relations, my mother and Mr. Winterdale entered the room.

Montgomery paid his respects to her with a coldness and reserve I had never seen before. She received him with perfect ease and good humour, and introduced him to Mr. Winterdale, who preserved a gloomy aspect, and said as little as could be said on the occasion. My mother did not seem to notice it; but told Montgomery that now there were gentlemen in the family, to make it agreeable to him, she hoped he would often take his dinner with us. Mr. Winterdale, in return, seemed not to notice the attention of his lady to her visitor, and took care not to add to the weight of the invitation by any thing of his own.

The rest of the week has passed on in a family party, interrupted only by another visit from Montgomery, who sat an hour with us, without seeing Mr. Winterdale. This morning, at breakfast, my mother began her first attack upon her husband, by desiring Eleanor and myself to be in readiness to accompany her to church to-morrow.

"To church!" exclaimed Mr. Winterdale, and started off his seat.

"Certainly," replied my mother, "I have all my life been accustomed to go to church."

"You did not go to church, while I was at the Lodge," said Mr. Winterdale.

"No," replied my mother, "I gave it up for the pleasure of attending you."

"Surely," said Mr. Winterdale,

“that motive ought to influence you still.”

“Pardon me,” said my mother, “the case is altered. I could no more devote my time to nursing a man who was well and sound, than you would choose to break your leg once in two months for the sake of my services. I can only assure you, that if such a misfortune should happen again, I will attend you with the same assiduity as before.”

“But to go to church,” rejoined Mr. Winterdale, “is what I could never have supposed you would have been guilty of!”

“My dear Mr. Winterdale,” said my mother, “I am truly concerned to hear you give such an epithet to what I consider as a sacred duty.”

“I have no objection to your sacred duties,” replied her husband; “but I

can never suffer you to enter the church of that pickpocket scoundrel Thacker."

"It would be presumption in me," said my mother, "to enter into an argument with you on the merits of Mr. Thacker. You have known him longer than I have, and, I dare say, know him better; but, let his character be what it may, I should think his instructions from the pulpit must be good. He cannot, certainly, introduce any of his pickpocket notions there."

"What signify the instructions of a man whose whole conduct gives them the lie? Are they calculated to make any impression on his hearers, when they make none upon himself?"

"I am not one who look so far. If a revengeful man preach forgiveness of injuries, I consider myself bound to follow his precepts, rather than his example. If his doctrine have not a proper influ-

ence upon his own life, it ought not to have the less upon mine."

"But Thacker's behaviour has been so very outrageous that it is a sin to countenance him, even in his own church. He has exacted tythes beyond all reason, justice and precedent, and brought an action against me, because I refused to pay them."

"He bought the living, and wished to make the most of his merchandize. However, I think you were perfectly right not to pay what he had no right to demand."

"Yes; but the worst of it was that I was obliged to pay it at last. The Jury gave a verdict in his favour."

"That was hard, indeed. I promise you that if I hear him say one word about tythes, in his sermon, I will not listen to it."

"Lady Winterdale, do you think I

am to be jested out of my fixed abhorrence of that devil of a parson? I have lived within five hundred yards of him these twelve years; and, in that time, nobody has ever dared to speak to me in his favour."

Nor do I, said her Ladyship. I think him ignorant, prejudiced, and impertinent, from my own knowledge of him: you say he is rapacious, and I do not see the least reason to doubt it. I give him up to you intirely. Think of him as you do; or still worse, if you please; but, as I shall certainly go to church to-morrow, I depend upon hearing something from him that I may profit by, when I am there."

"And you are determined to go to church," said Mr. Winterdale.

"I am," replied his lady.

"I am loth to quarrel with you in the first week of our marriage," said Mr.

Winterdale ; “or I would swear by the living God you should not go.”

“Dreadful!” exclaimed my mother. “You would terrify me beyond expression, if you did. You cannot imagine how it would shock me to have you forsworn! Besides, I love you so much that I shrink from the idea of any thing, which might, possibly, make me love you less.”

“Take care,” said Mr. Winterdale. “I am not accustomed to have my commands treated in this light manner.”

“Commands is such a frightful word,” said my mother, “that I would banish it from my vocabulary. What would you think of me, if I were to command you to go with me to church?”

“I could scarcely be more surprized than I am,” replied Mr. Winterdale.

“Some wives would do it,” said my mother ; “and some husbands would

take a pleasure in obliging them ; but I require no such thing. I know my duty better, and shall be content with going myself."

" Then the devil go with you," cried Mr. Winterdale, and flung out of the room.

Henry had been reading, during this curious dialogue, and Eleanor and I had been very attentive to our needlework. When Mr. Winterdale was gone, we looked at one another, and then, with some apprehension, at my mother.

" My dear Madam," said Eleanor, " do not provoke Mr. Winterdale. He has never been used to contradiction, and you do not know the consequence."

" Go, go," replied she ; " you are a little novice. Every one ought to bear contradiction. Do not I bear it? Either he or I must be master ; and do not you think it had better be I, who will allow

him to do as he pleases, than he, who would not suffer me to have a will of my own? If I gave up so reasonable a thing as going to church, every thing else must follow; and I must be his slave, as well as his wife."

When my mother had left the room, "Eleanor," said I, "I need not have pitied my mother for having given Mr. Winterdale a power over her: she seems qualified to keep it in her own hands."

"A pretty school this for young ladies," said Henry. "You will learn how to behave when you are wives."

"I am afraid the lessons will be thrown away upon us," said Eleanor; "for Charlotte and I have determined not to marry, unless we love our husbands; and surely if her Ladyship loved Mr. Winterdale, she could not exasperate him, and be unmoved herself."

"That circumstance is most porten-

tous for my father," said Henry. "If he can provoke Lady Winterdale, he may hope for some advantage in his turn: if she keep her temper, I tremble for him. He has not had a fair trial yet, however; and I think, with you, that nothing but indifference can carry her through it."

At dinner my mother treated Mr. Winterdale with unaffected sweetness and good humour. His surly looks gave way, by degrees, to his common aspect, which is never very far removed from them, and he won his rubber at whist, in the evening, with his usual exultation.

I have written a letter of unmerciful length; but, if you find it too fatiguing, you may serve it as the clergy of old did their sermons—take one half now, and reserve the other to a further opportunity. Now I am talking of that, I actually knew a clergyman who preached six

and twenty sermons on the attributes of God. Like the ancient task at the game of forfeits, where you “love your love with an A because he is Amiable, and you hate him because he is Avaricious, and he took you to the sign of the Angel, and treated you with Apricots,” he conducted his Maker through the alphabet: In his first sermon he undertook to prove, what no madman was ever mad enough to doubt, that God was Almighty; in the second, that he was Benevolent; in the third, Charitable; in the fourth, Divine, and so on. When he came to X, he was at a stand; and frankly owned to his congregation that there was no word in the English language beginning with that letter. Rather than disappoint them, however, he told them he would give them the sound, instead of the letter, and would that day prove to them that God was Extraordinary.

You may smile at this; but, I assure you, so did not the clergyman. It is an absolute fact; and he preached his sermons with true christian piety; though, perhaps, not without some admiration of his own ingenuity.

For fear I should add to the length of my letter by something else which I had no intention to say, I will hasten to tell you that I am, in my own name and person,

Your's, most truly,

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

LETTER XXVI.

TO MR. WILLIAM MENDALL.

Winterdale, June 14, 1812.

DEAR MUSTER MENDALL,

THIS is to lett you to kno that last Mundy as ever was, my master got up as yousal ; and drest himself as yousal, and Muster Fourcloaths call'd afore brecksfust, as you kno he do sumetimes, and they went out to gather, and nobody thot nothin about it. And presently Rafe coms runing, and out o wind, and he sed says he, my masters gooin to be marrid, and hees gon to church, now, and theres a sheas gon to Mrs. Merryveals, and now the cats out o the bag ; but how the devle hur comd to be Mary Mundgumery, I be not wurthy to kno.

Gad! I didnt stay a minnit. I laid my cacks a rising, and put the fyer in the huven, and I bids Rafe grind the Koffe, and cut me a plait o ham, and fatch me sum hegs, and lay the cloth, and hacks no queshtons. And wen master comb back, he just sed your ladys a comming, and that was hall. And so they comd to brecksfust, and Miss Mowbry and hall; and I thought to miself, thinks I, wot shal I doo? Howsever I diddent let the grass grow under my fit, and I sent um in a hansomish dinner considuring. And so in the arternoon Madam sent for me up stares, and I was fritened out o mi verry witts, thats the truth. But I must tel you that shes a lady by rite and title, and we be all to call hur your Ladyship, only I be a litel aukardish at it at furst. But, as I was a telling on you, wen I got into the drawn room

I downrite quacked for fere ; and says my Lady says she, Misis Stable, says she, you sent us in a verry nise dinner, and you sholl be my house skipper ; but you can't possible do all the wurk yourself, now, and you shall have my cuck and housmade under you, and Ile speke to your master to raise your wage.

God in heven bles you, my Lady says I, Ile do the best as ever lys in my power to sarve your Ladyship, by nite or by day, says I: and I was reddy to jump out a my skin for joy ; but I don't kno whatever it was culd ale me, I was sich a fool that I bostid owt a crying, and was fost to leve the rum. And so I sits at the hed of the tabel, in my hone rum, and every boddy cals me Misis Stable ; only Rafe pops out Martha now and tan ; but I shall larn him better manners in time ; but my master and my Lady and the gentlefokes call me

Stable; but my dear Muster Mendall, you may call me Martha, as yousall.

To be shure, Madam—God furgive me, my Lady, I mean—is a good swete lady, and I shal lov hur the longest day I has to live; but she has bin to church to day, nulus volus, wether my master wold or no, and, moor nor that, she broght Muster Sharp and Madam Thaker hom with her to dinner. I wunder how she darst. Robbut said the Squir lucked plagy sulky; but we sarvants must here and see and say nothin; tho I must nedes say it was rayther howdashus on her; but thats nyther hear nor thear.

As for Rafe hes quit and clear beside himself. His allis arter Jenney house made, and crys her up for a booty. For my part, I thinks hurs no grate things; for all he macks sich a fuss with her; nothin but a letel red and wite, thats

hall; but he must have his fling. In my mind eyther Robbut or Tommus is as fur afore hur as lite from dark. But, dere Muster Mendall, I does not think none on um at all compairable to you, wich is all at present from

Yours, to comend,

MARTHA STABLE.

LETTER XXVII.

TO MR. WILLYAM MENDILL.

Winterdell, June 14, 1812.

HONORIT CUR,

THIS coms with mi humbel sarvice,
hopping to find yo in good yelth, as
thro marcy I be at this prison, an too
lett yo to no as mastr be morrid, an as
I was the first as fun it out; an Maddum

Merrywool tornd out to be Mary Mundgunberry at last: moor sham for hur I sy; for I ood nevr care hoo nod as I was Ralph Russetting. But hur be a lady o kwöllity, for all hur havbin ashamed o hur nam, an hur be to be called my lady; but I can hordly put my mowth e form to sy my lady this, an my lady that, and my lady toother; but I suppose it wull com nay chural ater a wile.

Betwen yo an me an the post, I thinks Maddam be a tarter, an Mastr hav met ooth his mach, an uf they can monitch him, thy has but one moor to fere, an that be the very devl himself. Hur hav had the imporance to goo to chorch to dy, in spite o his tith, an hur hav brot whom Mister Sharp an Maddam Tacker to dinner, an the Mastre lucks nashonly out o sorts, an I thinks

hur wool cach it wan thy be gon. Hur donna no the nater on him so wel as yo an me dun, an ma hap hur ma find hur a got the rung sow by the here; but I bleev as thees kwollity ma doo things as common wimen darnt, an uf hur a thees tricks, hur hav moor.

As for me, I be as happi as the dy be long; and Mather hav got purfarmunt, an cuts rost bif, an a nothin to doo but luck ater the mayds, an ge out shugger an plums, an a got to be Missis Stable. I thinks, uf thy com to that, as I shud be Mister Stable, seein as how I lucks ater the hossis; but thy cawn me Ralph, as oosal. And Jinny the hous maid be a mortal pratty wench, yo no, an mortal kind harted, an hur do run soo e my yed that somtims I hardly do no a shool from a curry com. Cuck lucks plagy sower about it, an do hordly gee me saut to

mi porritch; but I donna care for shee.

Mastr be ten times bettr to plese then he wos afore; for he do beggin to find he binnot allis to hav his one wy, no moor nor the rest o monkind, and I do fettle him wthout much grumblin. We kip a rare good howse, an it wul but hold; an Robud an Tomus be booth gain men, and wul gee won a lift at a pinch. As to the ladys maydes, thy carrin thur yeds abov a boddy the nor-most hite as evr wos, and torn up thar nosis as uf a boddy wanna worthy to whip their shoos: but wot care I! let um kip thur seckund hondit came bricks, an jack or nots, and give me Jinney, in a good holesum oolen petty cot; for I donna like sich varmont. The too yung misis be havin kinder be hafe, an wen thy has onny thin to sy to a boddy, God

bles thar pratty fasis, thy smile, an luck
so goodhumered, that I ood run forty
myle to sarv um. So no moor at prison
from yurs till jeth,

RALPH RUSSETTING.

LETTER XXVIII.

TO MR. WILLIAM MENDALL.

Winterdale, June 14, 1812.

I WAS married last Monday ; but, instead of wishing me joy, I desire you will help me to curse the fool that ever expected happiness with a woman.

With regard to money matters, I am not much mistaken. It is true I keep an extravagant table ; I expected it, and I am paid for it. But my wife ! The moderate, frugal, retired, complying Mrs. Mereval, alias Lady Montgomery, alias Madam Deviless, turns out to be the very reverse of all she pre-

tended to be ! Having fastened me in her claws, she shews her cloven foot, already.

The very day after our marriage, she introduced to me a tall, strapping, dashing, young fellow of an officer, a relation of her former husband. I had heard, before, of his being at the Lodge, after one of the girls, no doubt. I gave him a very cool reception : if that does not do, I shall affront him ; for I will have no red coats here.

Yesterday she had not only the assurance to tell me to my face that she would go to church, but the impudence to persist in it, contrary to my positive commands, and to laugh at them and me.

To-day she has done worse. She has been to church, and has brought back that scoundrel Thacker's wife and nephew, and placed them at my own table, in defiance of me. I gave them several

pills at dinner, which, let them digest as they may. The she-dog had a mind to have worried me, once ; but my precious help-mate did not seem to like that, and shewed her teeth, in return. I could curse them and the whole sex together ; but, irritated as I am, and most justly, I will not curse upon paper, which might upbraid me when my passion was over. Not that I will ever forgive her ! Lady Winterdale, I mean, (I hate to call her by the name.) As for Madam Fish, she is beneath my notice.

I write this while they are cackling in the drawing room. As soon as they march, I shall endeavour to bring her Ladyship to a sense of her duty ; by fair means, if I can ; and, if these fail, I shall let her know who is master.

Have I been sole director of my own actions, and of every person and thing

around me, for five and twenty years; to be bullied, and laughed at by a woman! Have I been sole cock of my own dunghill, and no other cock has dared to approach it, but has retreated with drooping wings; to be flown at, and pecked, by my own hen! and next, perhaps, by her chickens, mild and modest as they look, for I will never trust mildness and modesty more!

I intended Charlotte for Henry, when the law-suit should be decided in her favour, as I mentioned to you before; but, knowing women to be such serpents, I can hardly find in my heart to turn him over to one. However, as there is no way of providing an heir to the estate, but marriage, he must submit to it, as his ancestors did before him. The girl may be as well as the rest, and her fortune will make him some amends.

You will not fail to bring with you an abstract of every document relating to the title of the Montgomery estate. Your presence will be some alleviation of the miseries of

JOHN WINTERDALE.

END OF FIRST VOLUME.



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